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ABSTRACT

The realization of the need for reform in Australia's vocational education and training (VET) system stems largely from changing economic circumstances and a changing industrial relations environment. The reforms are intended to provide the following: national coherence in training arrangements and outcomes, improved quality and more widespread provision, greater flexibility in training delivery, a stronger focus on the needs of industry, participation by disadvantaged groups, and increased public recognition of the value of training. A central aspect of the reforms is the establishment of a competency-based training system. The National Training Reform Agenda has established the directions for future development of VET in Australia. Components of the new system include the following: competency-based training; development of National Competency Standards; Australian Standards Framework; Australian Qualifications Framework; National Framework for Recognition of Training; development of training curriculum; flexible delivery of training; convergence of general and vocational education; and increasing the involvement of young people in education and training. Other important aspects of the new national training system are the promotion of closer linkages between vocational education institutions and industries and improved participation of special social groups. (Illustrative best practice examples show the new system in action. Appendixes contain a glossary and 58 references.) (YLB)

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International Project on Technical and Vocational Education
Projet international pour l'enseignement technique et professionnel

CASE STUDIES ON TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Australia

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KEY FACTS

Area: 7, 682, 300 sq km

Population: 17.5 million (1993), growth rate 1.5 per cent per annum. Some 20 per cent of the population were born outside Australia creating a multicultural society. About 1.5 percent of the population are indigenous people (Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders).

Official title: Commonwealth of Australia.

Climate and Geography: The climate ranges from tropical in the north to temperate in the south. Some 70 per cent of the country is arid with very low annual rainfall in the centre of the continent. Most of the agricultural and manufacturing centres are located in fertile zones on the east, south, south-east and south-west of the continent.

Official Languages: English.

Ruling Party: Australian Labor Party (ALP).

Head of Government: Prime Minister, Mr Paul Keating.

Currency: Australian Dollar ($AUS = 100 cents).

Political System: Australia, a parliamentary democracy, is a federation of six States and two Territories in which legislative powers are divided between the Australian Federal Parliament with a 148-member House of Representatives and a 76-member Senate and the State and Territory parliaments. A cabinet of senior ministers, headed by a prime minister, holds day-to-day executive responsibility and is formed by the party with a majority in the House of Representatives The major political parties are the Australian Labor Party, Liberal-National Coalition and Democrats.

Education: Three-tiered structure with primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. In 1992 there were over 2 million children enrolled in government primary and secondary schools and 850, 000 attending private schools. School attendance is compulsory throughout Australia between the ages of 6 and 15 years (16 in Tasmania). The tertiary sector, comprising universities, TAFE, community and adult and further education colleges/institutes and private providers accounts for about 2 million full and part-time students.

Social welfare: Australia provides old-age, invalid and widow's pensions, unemployment, sickness and supporting parents' benefits, family allowances and other welfare benefits and allowances. Australia has a universal health insurance system known as Medicare which is financed in part by a 1.25 per cent levy on taxable incomes above a certain level.

Economy: Australia is the world's largest exporter of alumina, wool, beef and veal, mineral sands, coal, live sheep and steel and among the top suppliers of wheat, sugar, iron ore, bauxite and nickel. However, the services sector accounts for about 70 per cent of employment and about 60 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

	% of GDP	% of labour force
Agriculture (incl. forestry, fishing)	3	5
Industry (manufacturing, construction)	32	24
Mining	5	1.5
Service industries	60	70

(Australian Bureau of Statistics data)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Australia's vocational education and training system is currently in a state of transition while major, far-reaching reform processes are being implemented. A national Training Reform Agenda has been established which has brought together Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments, employers and unions in collaborative action to improve the performance and the status of vocational education. The realisation of the need for reform stems largely from changing economic circumstances and a changing industrial relations environment.

In the 1980s the Australian economy was affected by deteriorating trade conditions and the decline of certain industries which have traditionally been strong contributors to the economy. Moves to increase the productivity and flexibility of industry to counter these trends have brought about major changes in workplace organisation. A 1988 National Wage Case decision linked salary increases to the promotion of structural efficiency in industrial settings, thereby stimulating an extensive award restructuring process which provided for skill-based career paths. Increased participation and improved outcomes in vocational education and training are being seen as vital for promoting future economic development and facilitating industry restructuring.

The newly emerging training system is focused at the national level and has resulted in the development of national infrastructure to provide co-ordination for training arrangements across the country. Commencing with an important agreement between the Commonwealth, State and Territory ministers responsible for vocational education and training in 1989, the features of a national system have progressively taken shape over the last five years.

While the major providers of recognised vocational education and training have been the government-funded Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges, the new system encourages private providers, TAFE/industry collaborative arrangements and a stronger vocational orientation in the secondary schools. It is recognised that both initial training and retraining are of importance - young people entering the workforce for the first time need basic training and an understanding of the requirements of employment; workers currently in employment need to upgrade their range of skills or move to new broader work roles; experienced workers who are unemployed may need to move in new career directions.

The reforms are intended to provide national coherence in training arrangements and outcomes, improved quality and more widespread provision, greater flexibility in training delivery, a stronger focus on the needs of industry, participation by disadvantaged groups and increased public recognition of the value of training.

A central aspect of the reforms is the establishment of a competency-based training system. National competency standards are being devised for each occupational group by representatives of the industries concerned. Training is to be directed to the achievement of competency standards and to focus on the ability to perform in the workplace. This system allows industry to establish the required outcomes of training and provides for national consistency.

A National Framework for Recognition of Training complements this system by defining the requirements for accreditation of courses and opening up the training market to allow registration of training providers other than the government-funded institutions. It supports flexible pathways to achievement of competency by articulation arrangements between courses and the recognition for learning whether formally or informally acquired.

A strong commitment to the involvement of young people in vocational education and training has been made. The general education sector is expected to play its part in preparation for employment by including in its programs a focus on "Key Competencies" which are broadly based attributes necessary for creative and effective participation in the workplace.

In addition, the new Australian Vocational Training System, which is currently at pilot stage, provides for a complete reform of entry-level training. Within this program young people may obtain entry-level vocational certificates by choosing from a range of learning arrangements combining structured work experience with study in school, TAFE college or equivalent.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Another key aspect of the system is the development of strategies to improve participation and outcomes for disadvantaged groups in the community. Many initiatives are in place to support increased participation of women, and strategies have been developed to support Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander people and disabled people. Special programs for people of non-English speaking background and a large range of labour market programs provide training opportunities for the unemployed.

The directions for future development of vocational education and training in Australia have been established by the Training Reform Agenda. Many of the features of the new system are at trial stage with some issues still being resolved. While it is possible to point to a range of successful outcomes of the reforms to date, ultimately the process is long-term and may take several more years to reach stability.

This paper describes the context for the reform process, and the issues identified leading up to the reforms. The latter part of the paper is an account of the key features of the Training Reform Agenda with illustrative best practice examples showing the new system in action.

1. THE CONTEXT FOR REFORM OF AUSTRALIAN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

1.1 Economic conditions

Australia has experienced a number of significant changes to its economy in the past decade, the major trends being:

- a major structural shift in employment away from manufacturing and agriculture to employment in service industries such as community services, personal services, hospitality and tourism, and finance. There are increasing employment opportunities in the leisure/ entertainment industries;
- the development of 'new' industries in areas such as telecommunications, information, biomedical and materials technologies; and
- a significant trend away from mass production approaches in industry towards 'flexible manufacturing'.

At the same time, Australia's economy has been affected by a more highly competitive global market place, reforms to Australia's currency regulations and financial markets, and the lowering of tariff barriers. A weakening trade situation has led to a deterioration in the current account balance and a large and growing foreign debt. In particular, Australia's balance of payments problem has forced the Australian Government to recognise that Australia is living 'beyond its means'.

The consequences have been the decline of certain manufacturing sectors, such as the clothing, textile and footwear and vehicle manufacturing industries with a progressively increasing unemployment rate (national average 10.8 per cent, January 1994), although the continued upward trend in unemployment now appears to be on the decrease (9.5 per cent July 1994).

However, there is no doubt that internal factors have also contributed to Australia's difficulties. Some analysts have argued that Australia's economic ills are the legacy of too much protection, which has resulted in an inefficient industry unable to effectively compete in the international arena and unwilling to invest in new technology and training. Other commentators believe that Australia's economic difficulty is, in part, the result of a lack of research and innovation by industry. Management groups have pointed to wage costs, demarcation problems and the difficulties of dealing with a multiplicity of unions.

Although exports of some manufactured goods have increased substantially in recent years, most Australian manufacturers concentrate on the domestic market. Australia has a comparatively small population which does not allow for the economies of scale that have enabled cheaper production in the economic giants such as America, thereby limiting profit and growth opportunities.

However there is the capacity within Australian industries to ensure that workplaces operate as efficiently as possible and are adaptable and flexible enough to compete locally and in overseas markets.

In the last decade Australian industries have realised that they needed to move away from rigid, low-skill, low-variety working arrangements which resulted in poor productivity and poor quality goods. Innovative work practices were needed, supported by a skilled workforce and built around greater quality control of industrial processes and improvement in customer service activities.

During the late 1980s, employer groups, unions and government joined forces in tripartite missions to study our overseas competitors' production methods, management systems and working arrangements.

1.2 Industry and award[1] restructuring

The push for industry and award restructuring was a significant step in a work-led recovery which had been gaining momentum since the mid-1980s.

In Australia industry restructuring became a process designed to achieve significantly higher levels of productivity, quality and flexibility in enterprises. The process involved the introduction of new forms of work organisation within individual enterprises and across whole industries. It also involves some or all of the following:

- new technology;
- job redesign; and
- restructuring of industrial awards.

To assist and encourage this recovery at the national level, the Federal Government has pursued a range of macro-economic reforms aimed at supporting industrial growth and innovation. These initiatives included:

- the Prices and Incomes Accord, which re-established a centralised wage-fixing policy to ensure wage justice and industrial relations stability; and
- the prevention of excessive wage increases giving stimulus to inflation and unemployment.

The 1987 National Wage Case decision, determined by the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, introduced a wages package which provided for industry and enterprise level negotiations and a co-operative approach between employers and unions to achieve better results. Implementing the process exposed a number of problems. It became clear that efforts to improve productivity were being hampered by structural inadequacies in many awards. The awards were outmoded and often imposed artificial constraints on the way in which work could be performed. They also made it difficult to reduce rigid and outdated demarcations and to overcome constraints on increasing the skills and career development paths of employees.

Recognising these problems, the 1988 National Wage Case decision established new guidelines, the central element of which was the Structural Efficiency Principle (SEP). It promoted new approaches to industrial relations practices, and in particular, directed attention to change at the workplace level. It acknowledged that issues of skills, careers, job satisfaction and equity had significant effects on productivity.

The Structural Efficiency Principle, supported by all government, employer and union stakeholders, stimulated an award restructuring process focused on the simplification of awards and reclassification of jobs, flexible work organisation, relativities between and within awards, payment systems and training for new skills.

In the new Metal and Engineering Industry Award, for example, the former 300 job classifications and 1800 different wage rates were 'broadbanded' and restructured around 14 broadly defined occupational groups ranging from a relatively unskilled level to professional level. Thirty industry divisions have been reduced to three broad trade streams, electrical and electronic, mechanical and fabrication. Employees in that industry can pursue a career, moving within and between these trade streams by undertaking appropriate training courses. Qualifications must complement new skill levels. Award restructuring provided the opportunity to:

- introduce more modern and flexible forms of work organisation and work patterns which allow companies to make the best use of new technology consistent with occupational health and safety standards;
- consider more flexible working patterns and arrangements of mutual benefit to employers, employees and the community;
- remove restrictive work and management practices which inhibit flexibility and efficiency, and which exist for reasons other than the safe and efficient performance of tasks; and
- remove discriminatory provisions from awards and encourage equal employment opportunity.

[1] Awards are legally enforceable documents which define terms and conditions of employment for individuals in Australian workplaces. They contain sets of job classifications, pay rates and general conditions applying to a particular occupation, industry or enterprise.

Underpinning the successful implementation of award restructuring, was the recognition that it should be supported by a nationally consistent and co-ordinated training effort. The commencement of an extensive process of training reform was formalised by an agreement between Commonwealth, State and Territory ministers in 1989, setting in train a process known as the 'National Training Reform Agenda', which will be examined in later sections.

2. HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Australia's three-tier education system

Prior to discussing specific human resource development initiatives within vocational education and training it is necessary to outline the current three-tier education framework which presently exits in Australia.

Education and training in Australia can be divided into three broad sectors.

The **Schools sector** is divided into government (or public) and non-government (or private) schools and further divided into primary (Preparatory to Year 6) and secondary (Years 7-12) sectors. Approximately two-thirds of young people are educated in government or public schools administered by State and Territory Governments, a further quarter are educated in religious schools and the remainder are educated in non-government independent schools. Some vocational education and training is offered in government and private secondary colleges.

The **Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sector** provides the majority of the government-funded vocational education and training in Australia. The TAFE system has, since its establishment in the 1970s, been comprised of government-funded colleges and institutes. A growing number of private sector training providers now offer accredited training to the public.

In addition, less formal adult and community education providers have a role in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system.

The **Higher Education (HE) sector**, comprises predominantly government-funded universities offering degrees, post-graduate certificates and diplomas and higher qualifications (for example, Masters and PhDs) in a range of academic, professional and vocational fields.

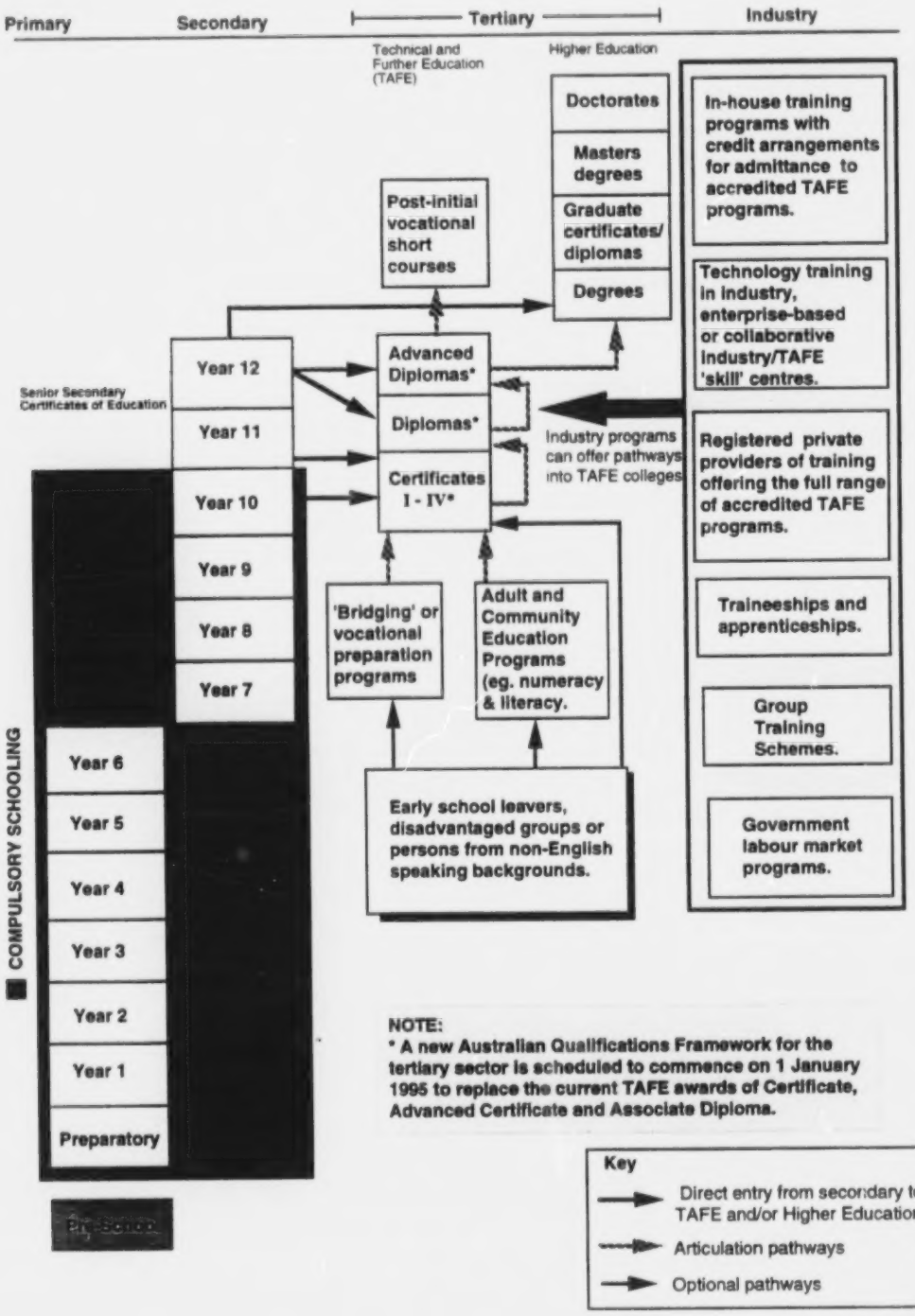
In Australia education has been synonymous with schooling and subsequent formal pathways of learning. Training has been considered complementary, but separate to education because it involves the development of work-related skills. In the past decade the boundaries between education and training have become increasingly blurred. Education and training are now perceived as inter-related components of a individual's lifelong learning process. In Australia, compulsory education (in most instances from Preparatory to Year 10) is provided by government and non-government funded primary and secondary schools. It is the responsibility of these schools to implement individual State/Territory education policies and procedures, as determined by State Ministers for Education, and overseen by the various Ministries of Education and government agencies.

Post-compulsory education, of which vocational education and training is a part, is the responsibility of secondary schools/colleges (for Years 11 and 12), higher education institutions and institutes/colleges of Technical and Further Education (TAFE). Industries or enterprises conducting 'on-the-job' and 'in-house' training and commercial (private) providers offering training programs also contribute to this sector.

The outcomes of the process of education and training in Australia are the skills and credentials/qualifications achieved by the participants. The economic benefits of education and training are both personal and societal. Within the workforce the development and maintenance of an employee's skills has direct benefits to the individual, the employer and to society through increased productivity, flexibility and capacity for specialisation of the labour force.

Figure 1.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PRIMARY, SECONDARY, TERTIARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING SECTORS AND INDUSTRY


Primary
Secondary
Tertiary
Industry
Technical and Further Education (TAFE)
Higher Education
Doctorates
Masters degrees
Graduate certificates/ diplomas
Degrees
Post-initial vocational short courses
In-house training programs with credit arrangements for admittance to accredited TAFE programs.
Technology training in industry, enterprise-based or collaborative industry/TAFE 'skill' centres.
Registered private providers of training offering the full range of accredited TAFE programs.
Traineeships and apprenticeships.
Group Training Schemes.
Government labour market programs.
Senior Secondary Certificates of Education
Year 12
Year 11
Year 10
Year 9
Year 8
Year 7
Advanced Diplomas*
Diplomas*
Certificates I - IV*
Industry programs can offer pathways into TAFE colleges
'Bridging' or vocational preparation programs
Adult and Community Education Programs (eg. numeracy & literacy.
Early school leavers, disadvantaged groups or persons from non-English speaking backgrounds.
COMPULSORY SCHOOLING
Year 6
Year 5
Year 4
Year 3
Year 2
Year 1
Preparatory
Pre-School
NOTE:
* A new Australian Qualifications Framework for the tertiary sector is scheduled to commence on 1 January 1995 to replace the current TAFE awards of Certificate, Advanced Certificate and Associate Diploma.
Key
Direct entry from secondary to TAFE and/or Higher Education
Articulation pathways
Optional pathways

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2.2 An overview of vocational education and training structures

The TAFE system is the major public provider of vocational education and training in Australia. The main constitutional responsibility and regulation of vocational education and training, including TAFE, resides with the State and Territory Governments.

There are currently approximately 270 major TAFE institutions in Australia. Some consolidation has occurred in the past 12-18 months with some small mono-purpose TAFE colleges being amalgamated with larger multi-discipline colleges with the purpose of streamlining administrative procedures, resource usage (staff, facilities, equipment and materials) and better utilisation of recurrent grant funding.

TAFE institutions provide a full range of training encompassing preparatory, operator, trade, post-trade, technician, paraprofessional and, in some fields, professional levels. Each year, around one and half million people undertake some form of training in TAFE institutions. TAFE institutions are the major providers of the off-the-job component of entry-level training under Australia's system of apprenticeships and traineeships.

A range of **private providers** operate in Australia, including business colleges and computer training companies. Increasingly, these providers are offering formally accredited training. The supply of quality training is expanding due to the efforts by both governments and providers to establish accreditation and professional standards.

Structured workplace learning in Australia is undertaken through 'Skill or Training Centres', apprenticeships and traineeships, group training and in-house training.

Some industry based training centres are recognised as **skills centres**, and are operated on an industry-wide basis or by individual enterprises which are industry owned and operated, and managed by a separately incorporated tripartite company. Training provided is expected to complement the training available off-the-job through TAFE and other training providers. Some centres are located in-plant, some are stand-alone and others closely linked to a TAFE college. Many skills centres have the capacity to provide training in advanced technology to enable Australian workers to be trained in, and kept abreast of, the latest Australian and international trends and developments in their industry.

The Australian Government has encouraged industry to develop skills centres by providing catalytic funding to assist with the initial building and equipment costs. The ongoing operating costs are the responsibility of the industry or enterprise management group.

Apprenticeships, Traineeships and the new **Australian Vocational Training System (AVTS)** provide an entry point for young people into trade careers and into non-trade occupations respectively. They involve a combination of structured on-the-job training at the workplace and off-the-job technical education at a TAFE college or other approved training centre.

Group Training arrangements aim to increase structured training opportunities for apprentices and trainees. They achieve this primarily through rotation with a range of host employers; many of these are small companies that do not have the capacity to recruit and train apprentices and trainees in their own right.

In-house Training is conducted by most organisations in addition to the more structured training schemes outlined above in the form of induction programs and ongoing enterprise-specific skill training for their employees.

2.3 The "informal" education and training sector

As well as the system of TAFE institutions, Australia also has a large variety of less formal **Adult and Community Education (A&CE) providers.** These include publicly funded, community based and private sector providers. There are now moves by Governments to encourage a more co-ordinated national approach to ACE and to encourage greater linkages with the formal education system.

Traditionally, A&CE has been regarded as primarily concerned with recreation/leisure or personal enrichment activities. However, there is an increasing recognition that A&CE includes significant provision of explicitly vocationally-oriented training. For example, A&CE provides training for the unemployed and other disadvantaged people to assist them back into the workforce. A&CE also promotes training in basic skills (for example, literacy and numeracy) which can serve as a stepping stone to participation in the formal VET system. A&CE programs tend to be based on local community initiatives and use a variety of readily accessible facilities such as schools and community centres. Most of the organisations are non-government,

non-profit organisations and the programs offered are normally low cost, often funded on a fee-for-service basis with some additional subsidies from government.

Recognising the significant work done by this sector in providing flexible programs to meet local needs, a government commissioned National policy on Adult and Community Education was drafted in 1993. The goals of the policy include pathways into formal education and training and increased recognition by other providers of its education and training outcomes.

The **Skillshare Program** is a significant example of a community-based strategy in vocational education. This program was designed to assist long-term unemployed and other disadvantaged persons into the workforce or further education and training. Skillshare provides structured skills training programs, assistance in job searching and enterprise activities to help unemployed people into self-employment.

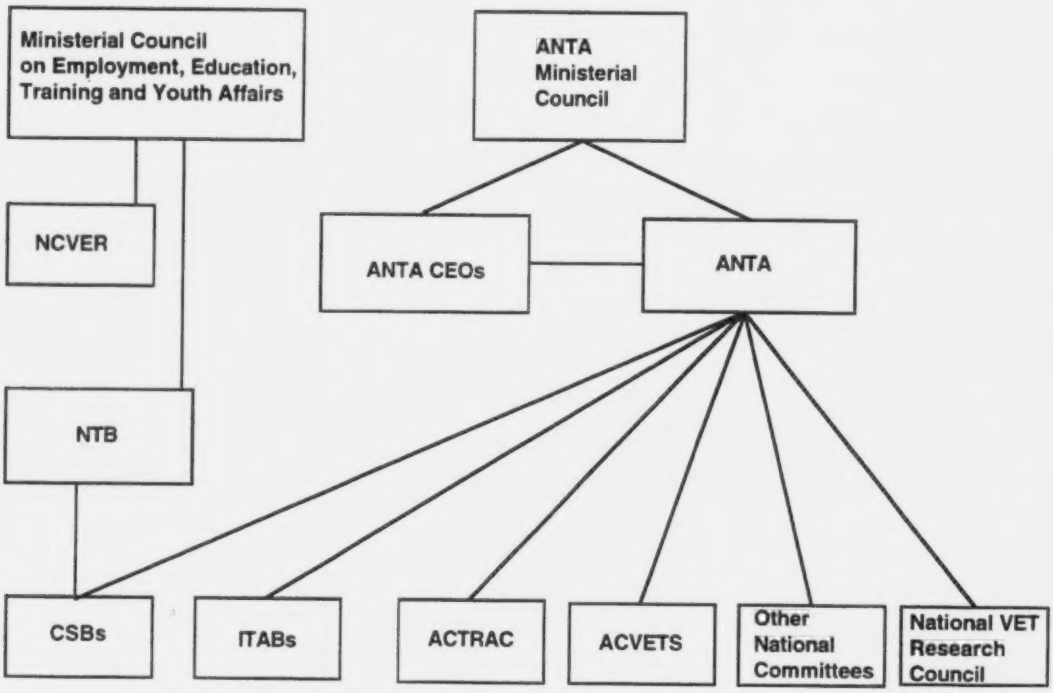
Skillshare projects operate as a partnership between the government and a community sponsor. The government provides funding and support services and the sponsor is required to generate community contributions to the project operations. Each Skillshare project develops a three-year business plan defining goals for labour market training based on the needs of local employers.

2.4 Key bodies in the vocational education and training system at the national level

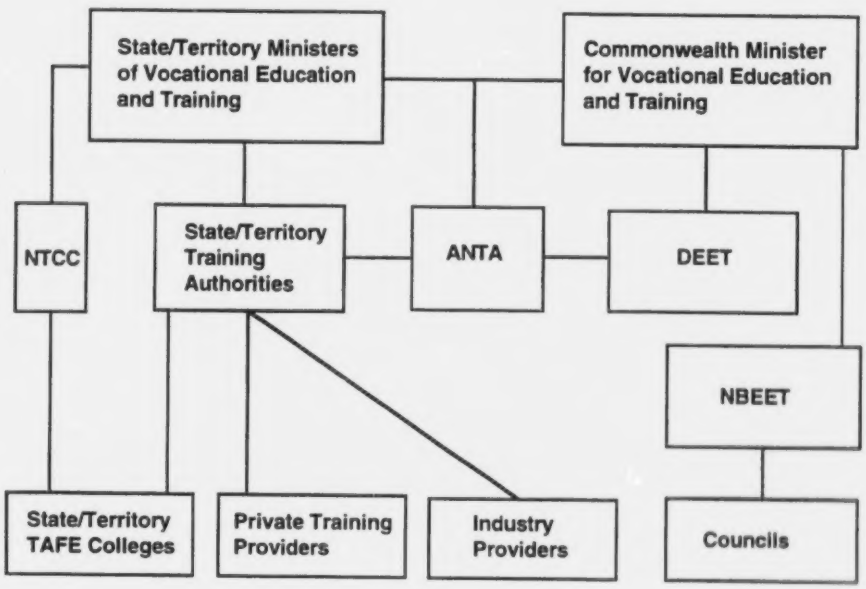
The following diagrams present an overview of the major national agencies and organisations which develop policies and guidelines, and administer the vocational and education system within Australia. Agencies, such as the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET), the National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) and the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) provide a valuable function in the delivery of vocational education and training. Newer agencies and bodies such as the recently established Australian National Training Authority (ANTA), the National Training Board (NTB) and the Australian Committee for Training Curriculum (ACTRAC) provide a focus for national VET policy development, development and registration of national competency standards and national curriculum and materials development. Descriptions of the bodies presented in the following two diagrams are located in the glossary (APPENDIX I).

Figure 2. NATIONAL SYSTEM OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

ADVISORY STRUCTURES



ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES



(Source: Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1994)

2.5 State vocational education and training systems

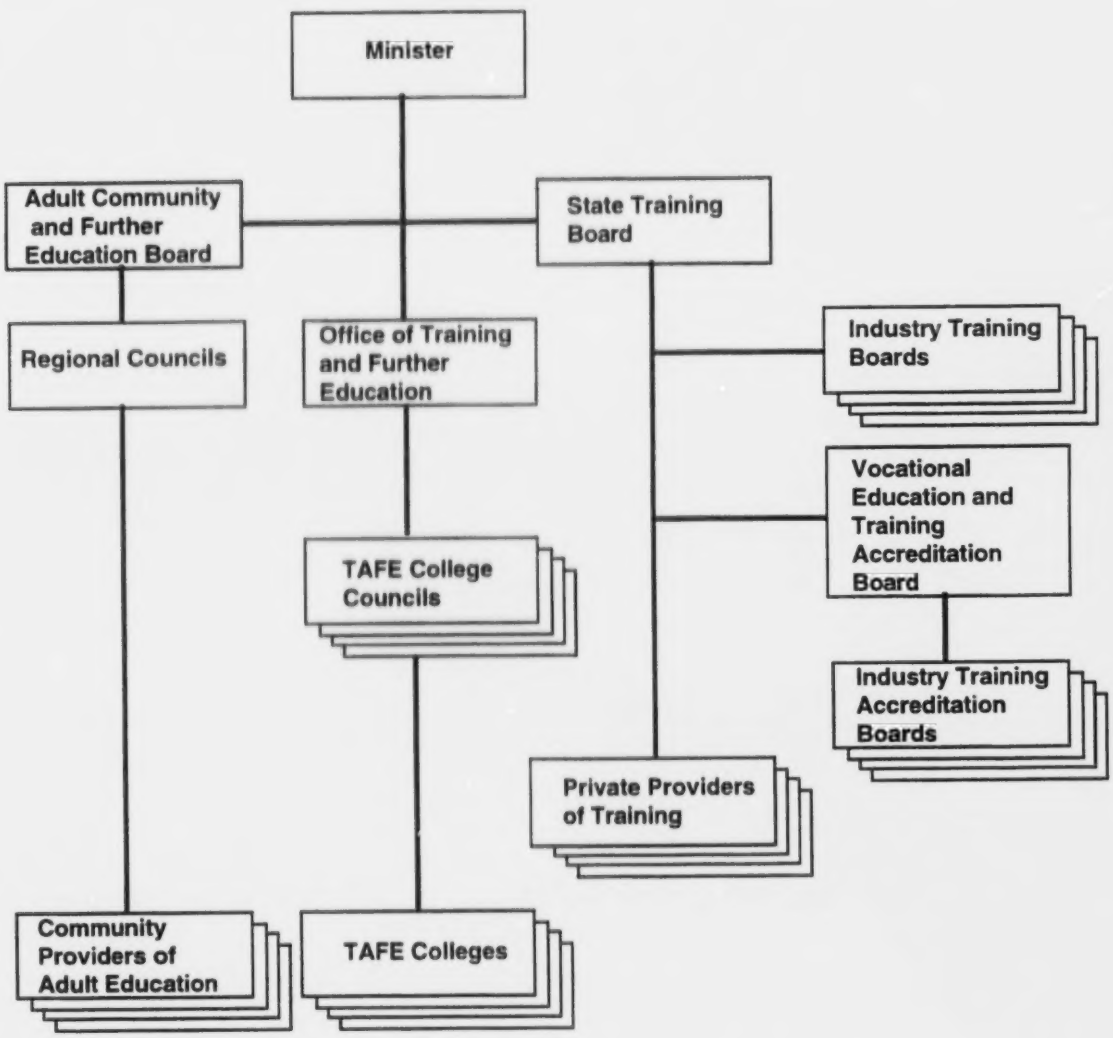
Each State and Territory has advisory and administrative bodies who have responsiblity to the State or Territory Minister of Vocational Education and Training. Each State and Territory has developed its own distinctive system, with unique characteristics of scale and operation, degrees of autonomy, relevance to a local industrial base, geographic spread of population, relationships with other State educational sectors and controlled by specific State Acts of Parliament, for example, the Victorian Vocational Education and Training Act 1990.

An illustrative example of a state vocational education and training system, in this instance the State of Victoria, is presented below.

Figure 3.

STRUCTURE OF A STATE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

VICTORIA



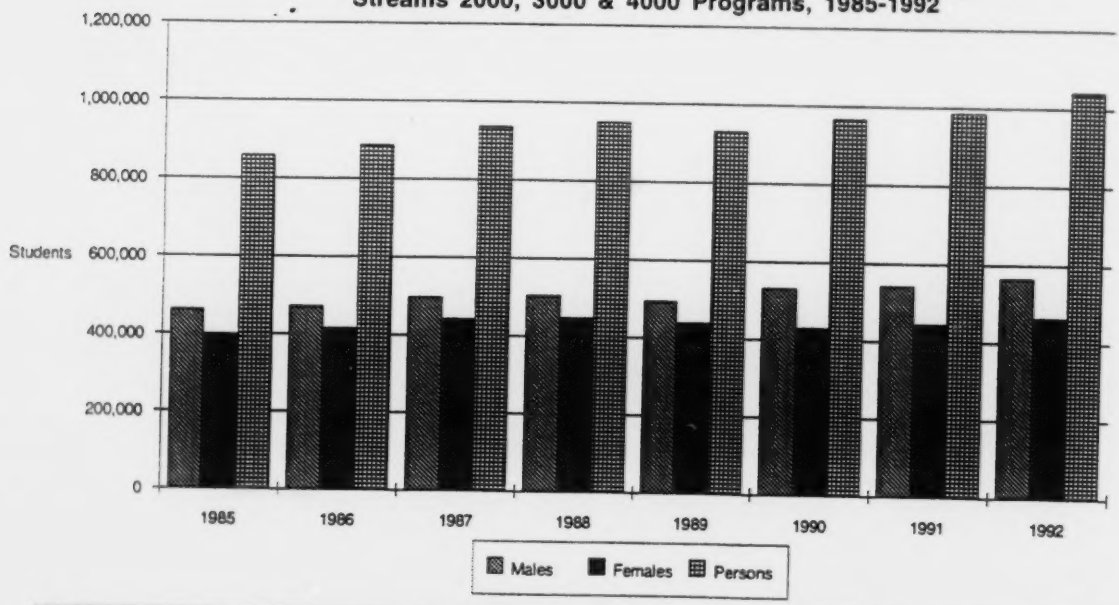
(Source: Office of Training and Further Education, Victoria, 1994)

2.6 The funding of vocational education and training

Australia's approach to financing education and training aims to achieve a balance between public and private funding of education and training, and to develop a culture where spending on education and training is seen by individuals and enterprises as an investment not a cost.

While the major financial responsibility for TAFE belongs to the States and Territories, increased Federal Government support since 1991 has enabled more Australians, particularly young people, to undertake vocational education and training.

Figure 4. National Technical and Further Education Enrolment Figures for Streams 2000, 3000 & 4000 Programs, 1985-1992



Stream 2000:	Courses for entry to employment or further education
Stream 3000:	Initial vocational courses covering operatives, skilled trades, trade technician/trade supervisory, paraprofessional technician/higher technician and professional.
Stream 4000:	Courses subsequent to an initial vocational course

(Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research, *Selected TAFE Statistics*, p8, 1992.)

In 1993, Federal Government grants for TAFE increased to A$565 million from A$432 million in 1992, an increase of 23 per cent over the year.

Under the new vocational education and training system, from 1 January 1994, funding arrangements were more assured with State and Territory Governments undertaking to maintain their support for vocational education and training in return for the Federal Government's commitment to growth in the level of recurrent funding of TAFE. The new Australian National Training Authority will receive Federal and State/Territory funds for vocational education and training and allocate funding to state training agencies on the basis of agreed goals and priorities.

Income support is offered by the Federal Government as a means of improving access to educational opportunities for students who are financially disadvantaged.

A summary compiled by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research providing statistical data comparing enrolments, staffing and expenditure for TAFE for 1990, 1991 and 1992 is included as APPENDIX II).

2.7 The establishment of an 'open' training market

Currently vocational education and training is complex and includes a number of players. These include TAFE colleges, industry, enterprise and community based providers, commercial private providers and increasingly, secondary schools. The private sector is one of these players and is making a significant contribution to the Australia's total training effort. It has been estimated that in addition to the government contribution of $2.6 billion to vocational education and training, industry matches that amount in its own training.

Until recently the training market was dominated by the TAFE colleges. The need for training currently exceeds TAFE's capacity to service the demand and therefore a number of other training providers have been encouraged by government to enter the training arena. The government's aim is to improve the training market by introducing competition between all training providers with the aim of improving quality and the associated cost and service benefits.

The result of this open training market will be three key outcomes:

1. A framework for qualifications, standards and assessment within which diverse training providers may operate flexibly, focussing on their client's needs and to delineate the lines of responsibility and accountability. It will allow government authorities to know who is accountable for each part of the vocational education and training system, where the funds are used, where public funds for training goes and ultimately, that the funding is being spent in the best possible manner.

2. An opportunity for the broader range of quality formal education and training to be recognised, wherever it may be provided. This involves recognising the wide range of formal training providers through both public and private expenditure on the total vocational and training effort.

3. The introduction of competition will provide a mechanism to enhance program quality within the entire training market and encourage efficiency gains within the TAFE sector.

The Government, in providing a climate for competition, will still have the responsibility for ensuring which industries and private providers have access to public funds and that all training providers meet stringent standards and government regulations for the delivery of training programs.

The government's open training market strategy aims to balance co-operation and competition between providers of training with the intended outcome of increased benefits for all clients of vocational education and training.

An important strategy in the creation of an open training market was the implementation of the Federal Government's Training Guarantee (Administration) Act 1990 on 1 July 1990. It was introduced as a mechanism to stimulate industry's commitment and investment in training. In the past, expenditure by some sectors of industry had been comparatively low, by international standards.

The Training Guarantee Levy imposed a minimum training requirement on employers with an annual payroll of $226,000 or more (indexed annually to changes in Average Weekly Earnings) to spend 1.5 per cent of the salary on 'eligible training' of their staff. Employers who spent less than the minimum training requirement on eligible training activities in any financial year become liable to pay a Training Guarantee charge equal to the shortfall.

The recently released (May 1994) Federal Government White Paper 'Working Nation,' which details a $AUS 6.5 billion four-year plan to boost growth and tackle unemployment, has suspended the training guarantee levy for 1994-95 and 1995-96 while new employer incentive schemes are implemented which are designed to create extra jobs and training places. It will be abolished if industry/business meets the training targets as outlined in the White paper.

3. FUTURE DIRECTIONS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN AUSTRALIA

In 1989, Australia embarked on a massive program of training reform which has come to be known as the National Training Reform Agenda.

The impetus for the reform process was the recognition by key stakeholders in the Australian economic system that Australia needed new directions in training to improve its economic performance. Businesses, workers and governments had all acknowledged the need for Australia to improve its competitiveness through training.

It is significant that the Australian trade union movement was a key player in establishing the ground work for the reform process, acknowledging that the best interests of the workers depended upon a strong and healthy economy. Their support along with the support of employers' organisations, has been a crucial factor in enabling these reforms to take place.

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and Trade Development Council (TDC) fact-finding mission to Europe in 1986 made recommendations about, macro-economic policies, wages, prices and incomes, trade and industrial policy, the labour market and industrial democracy. The section of the report *Australia Reconstructed* on 'Labour Market and Training Policies' was of particular importance to education and training.

In essence it stated that Australia's future international competitiveness was largely dependent on how successful it was in its ability to exploit up-to-date knowledge and skills-intensive products and processes. The report stressed that success in a world of rapidly changing technologies would require a constant effort to acquire and develop state-of-the-art skills. This view formed the basic tenet of current Federal Government policies and programs.

This influential document brought forward a flow of responses from government, employers and other groups and ultimately laid the ground work for the far-reaching reforms of the Training Reform Agenda.

In April 1989, the Federal Government issued a paper, *Improving Australia's Training System* which identified priorities for a new national approach to training and a landmark Special Ministerial conference involving Federal, State and Territory Ministers responsible for vocational education and training made agreements establishing the foundation of the new system. This conference of Ministers was significant in that it set in place the directions and priorities for vocational education and training for the 1990s.

Specifically commitment was made to:

- introduce a competency-based training system;
- establish a National Training Board; and
- implement a new method of recognising migrant skills through the establishment of the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR).

Since 1989 the reform process has gathered momentum. Its guiding principles have been refined through the work of a large number of working parties under the auspices of the Vocational Education, Employment and Training Advisory Committee (VEETAC) which, as of 1 January 1994, has now been replaced by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). Many changes have taken place which have altered the structures, processes and responsibilities involved in vocational education and training. Other features of the system are still in development or at trial stage.

In 1992 the following set of national goals for Vocational Education and Training in Australia was endorsed by the responsible Australian ministers and forms the framework which ANTA has adopted.

Goal 1 A national training system

Develop a national vocational education and training system in which publicly funded, private and industry providers can operate efficiently and collaboratively and which meets the needs of industry and individuals.

Goal 2 Quality

Improve the quality of the outcomes of vocational education and training.

Goal 3 Outcomes and opportunities for individuals

Improve vocational education and training opportunities and outcomes for individuals.

Goal 4 The needs of industry

Improve the ability of the vocational education and training system to respond to current and future needs of industry

Goal 5 Equity

Improve the access to and outcomes from vocational education and training for disadvantaged groups

Goal 6 Training as an investment

Increase public recognition of the value of vocational education and training as an investment for both industry and individuals.

These goals identify the expected achievements of the reform process now underway. The following sections will discuss in more detail the problems the new system is designed to address, the specific policies and mechanisms established to support the reform effort, and provide illustrative 'best practice' examples of the new system in action.

4. ISSUES IN AUSTRALIAN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The introduction of the National Training Reform Agenda was a response to the recognition by governments, industry and union leaders of the need to address a number of key issues in the Australian vocational education and training system. The background to each of these issues is explained below.

4.1 The need for national coherence in training arrangements and qualifications

Under the Australian constitution the responsibility for education and training (apart from Higher Education) is held by the States rather than the Federal Government. Prior to the reform process, each State and Territory developed its own structures, procedures and qualifications systems making nationally uniform policies difficult to pursue. Other inefficiencies inherent in this system included the lack of portability of qualifications between States and Territories, a range of anomalies concerning eligibility to practice in particular occupations, and lack of clarity concerning the ability level of the holders of particular qualifications.

The national program of reform was enabled by agreements made at two Special Ministerial Conferences of Commonwealth, State and Territory ministers responsible for employment, education and training in April 1989 and November 1990. These established new national structures and approved the development of frameworks to implement a consistent Vocational Education and Training system across the nation. Since these in principle agreements were first achieved, rapid progress has been made in establishing national goals and policies, and removing the barriers and anomalies which previously existed between the States.

4.2 The need to ensure that training leads to competence

Structured training has been available for many years in occupations classified as "trades", via the apprenticeship system. For apprentices, the requirements for employment, the length of time in training, age at entry and wage rates were all embodied in legislation. The conditions included specified periods of time working for an employer and specified attendance at off-the-job training institutions (such as TAFE colleges/institutes). In times of prosperity, apprenticeship provided a secure entry to the workforce for a largely male cohort of young people.

However this system provided insufficient guarantee that an apprentice had been exposed to practical training in all relevant aspects of a trade. In addition, serving the required length of time often took precedence over the achievement of competence and there was no provision for recognising competence gained in a shorter period of time than that specified in the legislation.

This issue was addressed by the establishment of a competency-based system of training. In this system the standards of performance expected of a competent worker are specified by representatives of the relevant industry. These standards are recognised as the required outcomes of training. Training programs and courses must aim to develop the specified competencies, and assessment must be directed at showing that such competency has been achieved.

This provides for greater certainty in the outcomes of training, while at the same time allowing for more flexibility in the ways in which training can be undertaken, individual variations in length of time required and the possibility of recognising competency achieved outside the formal training system.

4.3 The need to extend access to structured training arrangements

The apprenticeship system covered only a narrow range of occupations. Many parts of the workforce had until recently no access to structured training arrangements. These included process workers in many industries, and areas traditionally dominated by women such as clerical and retail occupations.

Other groups were prevented by distance from training institutions or by work and family responsibilities from taking up training opportunities.

In 1985 following the Kirby Inquiry, the Australian Traineeship System was introduced which commenced the process of providing structured entry level training in areas not covered by apprenticeships. This process is being expanded under the National Training Reform Agenda. Competency standards and training

arrangements are being formalised for a much larger range of occupations. The new Australian Vocational Training System aims to ensure that all young people become involved in vocational education and training.

In addition flexible methods of delivering training are being encouraged to ensure that training is available in a variety of forms and can be accessed in a wide range of environments by individuals or groups according to their circumstances.

4.4 The need to improve access to training for disadvantaged groups

Reforms were also needed to ensure that vocational education and training was available to a wider section of the community.

Early school leavers who had not attained apprenticeships were frequently destined for unskilled, poorly paid work or unemployment with little opportunity for training. In addition there was no opportunity to undertake trade training as an adult. The apprenticeship system was geared to entry for teenagers.

Women were often disadvantaged in terms of access to training and their employment opportunities were frequently restricted to poorly paid, low status work. Other groups in the community such as Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, the disabled and people from non-English speaking backgrounds were similarly disadvantaged.

There are now major strategies in place to provide appropriate training opportunities for each of these disadvantaged groups.

4.5 The need to recognise skills acquired outside the formal education and training system

This issue has two main elements:

a) In some enterprises, particularly large companies, in-house training of employees is quite advanced and rigorously pursued with the purpose of gaining a competitive edge. Employees may attain significant competence via company training programs. However until the recent reforms were introduced, such competence was not recognised by any form of portable credential.

   Training courses provided by any "private" provider, such as commercial training organisations were also not officially recognised. Many short courses in areas such as computer skills and general business skills come into this category.

b) Many individuals also become competent in work-related skills by forms of learning that would not be recognised as "training" at all. Mastery of a job task by long experience in the workforce or self-taught processes related to life experience, may enable a person to perform competently. Without entering formal training such skills were previously unrecognised.

This lack of recognition was seen as having two adverse effects. Either the individual concerned remained uncredentialled with possible loss of job mobility, promotion prospects or entry to work, or the individual entered formal training and wasted their own time and public resources on duplicating training for which they had no need.

As part of the reform process, the National Framework for Recognition of Training establishes the principles for extending recognition of training providers to those outside the government-funded system, and for recognition of the learning of individuals to skills gained outside formal training.

4.6 The need to provide closer integration between work and learning

Efforts to form closer links between education and training, and the world of work are an essential part of the reform process. This issue is multi-faceted:

a) Secondary education has in the past been inadequately linked into the vocational education and training system. While many secondary schools put much effort into preparing academically oriented

students for higher education, most had very few links with TAFE colleges and frequently allowed students to leave school early with little preparation for the world of work or knowledge of how to obtain training.

The preparation of young people for employment has been given significant attention in the past five years. School curricula are now being re-designed to incorporate employment-related key competencies. At the same time the Australian Vocational Training System is proposing a range of new pathways for vocational learning linking work experience with off-the-job education, along with measures to ensure that all young people are involved.

b) There was a need to break down the view of some employers that training was the responsibility of the public education system or indeed that no training at all was required. This often resulted in an inflexible workforce with little capacity to extend into new areas.

Many of the current policies are designed to encourage employers to recognise training as an important investment, committing resources to the identification of training needs and to the provision of training for their staff.

c) The degree of influence by industry over vocational curricula taught in the TAFE system has been variable in the past. It was possible for courses to become out of touch with workplace realities or to fall behind current technologies and work practices.

In the new competency-based sytem, the process of competency standards development is firmly in the hands of industry personnel. To be accredited, all training curricula must now be clearly directed at the development of the specified competencies.

Developing the ability to perform competently under workplace conditions is the desired outcome of training. The work environment (sometimes in simulated form) is increasingly important in the training and assessment process.

5. NATIONAL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

By the end of the 1980s, the issues mentioned in the previous section had been recognised by all of the main stakeholders and a massive reform of training structures and procedures was initiated.

The Special Minister's Conference on Training in April 1989 established the initial agreements enabling the national reform process to commence. This conference committed all States and Territories to work together towards a competency-based training system and to the establishment of a National Training Board to provide a vehicle to oversee the development of national competency standards on which the system would be based.

The components of the new system have been progressively implemented and refined over the past five years. The remainder of this section, gives greater detail on the policies and strategies which are components of the National Training Reform Agenda.

5.1 Competency-based training

> "Competency-based training (CBT) is a way of approaching vocational training that places primary emphasis on what a person can actually do as a result of training (the **outcome**), and as such represents a significant shift way from an emphasis on the processes involved in training (the **inputs**). It is concerned with training to industry specific standards rather than with an individual's achievement relative to that of others within a group." (COSTAC, November 1990)

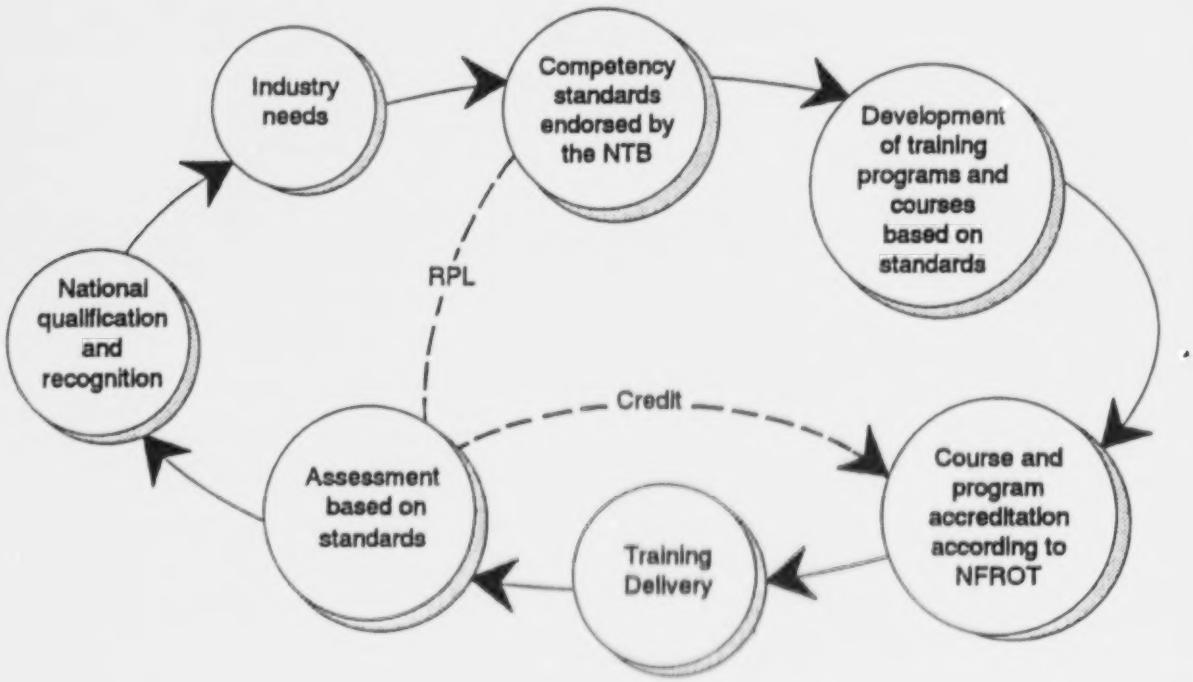
This is the definition of competency-based training provided in November 1990 by the Commonwealth/State Training Advisory Committee in a policy document setting out the framework for the new national system.

The aim of competency-based training is to improve the standard of workplace performance. Competency is expressed in statements of standards. When the standards required of a competent worker have been defined, a trainee's achievements can be judged against those standards, irrespective of the time spent in training and without comparisons with the achievement of others. In competency-based training the outcomes are predictable and directly related to tasks performed in the workplace.

The processes involved in this new training system are designed to significantly enhance the involvement of industry in both the design and delivery of training, creating a more collaborative relationship with the traditional providers of training.

The following diagram indicates the processes involved in competency-based training. Industry needs are the starting point for competency standards development. Ultimately the national qualification awarded at the end of the training process certifies an individual as 'competent' according to identified standards and needs of industry.

Figure 5. The Process of Competency-based Training


Industry needs
Competency standards endorsed by the NTB
Development of training programs and courses based on standards
National qualification and recognition
RPL
Credit
Assessment based on standards
Training Delivery
Course and program accreditation according to NFROT

(Source: NTB, *Annual Report* 1992/93)

5.2 The development of National Competency Standards

National competency standards are defined for a particular industry by Competency Standards Bodies which consist of nominated representatives from employers, employees and government agencies.

A policy and accompanying guidelines for the development of national competency standards has been set down by the National Training Board (NTB, 1991, 1992). The National Training Board, as well as assisting Competency Standards Bodies (CSBs) develop industry-defined competencies, also has the responsibility for endorsing and maintaining a register of competency standards developed by the CSBs.

Competency standards are defined as "*the specification of the knowledge and skill and the application of that knowledge and skill to the standard of performance required in employment.*" (NTB, 1992, p7)

To ensure that competency standards are not limited to the more trivial tasks, the Australian competency-based training system stresses the importance of the ability to transfer and apply skills and knowledge to new situations and environments. Competency must therefore encompass:

- the requirement to perform individual tasks (task skills);
- the requirement to manage a number of different tasks within the job (task management skills);
- the requirement to respond to irregularities and breakdowns in routine (contingency management skills); and
- the requirement to deal with the responsibilities and expectations of the work environment (job/role environment skills) including working with others

At the time of writing national competency standards had been developed covering over half of the Australian workforce.

5.2.1 Format of National Competency Standards

National competency standards are expressed in a common format to ensure consistency and comprehension:

Unit of competency:	a discrete component within a standard
Element of competency:	basic building blocks of the unit of competency
Performance criteria:	evaluative statements which specify required level of performance
Range of variables:	context/boundaries for a given unit of competency
Evidence guide:	context within which a trainee would need to be assessed.

Figure 6. National Competency Standards Format

Unit INT6 Participate in Effective Working Relationships

Range of variables:

This unit applies to all food and beverage operations, including the following establishments:

- Restaurants
- Clubs
- Convention centres
- Commercial catering operations
- Hotels
- Pubs
- Function facilities

This unit is designed as an introductory unit and is primarily concerned with essential knowledge and understanding which underpins effective performance in the workplace. As such, although some exposure to the workplace is recommended, performance of competencies in an actual workplace is not required at this level.

Element 1 Communicate in the workplace

Performance criteria

- Communication with staff and customers is effective and to industry standards, with regards to:
  - speaking
  - listening
  - using the telephone
  - writing
  - analysing and interpreting information
  - non-verbal communication
- Personal communication and interpersonal skills are monitored and developed in the workplace to enhance performance and address problem areas.
- Empathy and understanding is shown to co-workers in the work team, with regards to cultural differences.

Element 2 Present a positive image of the industry

Performance criteria

- Industry and enterprise standards of personal presentation are met, with regards to:
  - personal hygiene
  - poise and deportment
  - etiquette
  - body language
  - grooming
  - speech
  - dress or uniform
- Behaviour is appropriate to the industry and involves diplomacy, courtesy and tact.
- Attitudes, including positive motivation and self confidence, are displayed in work and communication with staff and customers.

Element 3 Participate in teamwork

Performance criteria

- Tolerance, honesty, commitment and co-operation are shown to team members.
- Work in the team reflects:
  - trust and support for the team members
  - recognition of team goals and effort
  - co-operation with team members
  - readiness to meet needs of team members.

Evidence Guide

- These units are designed as introductory units and indicate essential knowledge and understanding which underpins effective performance within the industry. Assessment of this knowledge and understanding could often be on the basis of simulation rather than actual workplace performance, for example:
  - role plays
  - verbal or written tests
  - projects
  - case studies
- Competency may be demonstrated through:
  - workplace performance of tasks in all units
  - role play situations
  - verbal assessment
- Competency may be assessed in conjunction with other service units.
- This unit is a pre-requisite to or co-requisite of other service units.

Food and Beverage—National Standards

Copyright: Tourism Training, Australia

5.3 Australian Standards Framework (ASF)

The Australian Standards Framework (set down in the National Training Board's Policy and Guidelines) defines a set of eight competency levels to provide consistent benchmarks across industries and sectors for differentiation between higher and lower skilled workers. This enables training and education programs to be constructed to allow workers to progress to higher levels at appropriate times in their working lives, and for assessment of experienced workers to identify their current competency level.

The Australian Standards Framework uses competency level descriptors to describe characteristics which differentiate the various levels. The main discriminating factors in the progression from lower to higher levels of competency are:

- the level of autonomy and discretion increases and is related to a wider span of activity;
- the range of contingencies to be dealt with and the complexity of work increases;
- responsibility and accountability expands;
- the complexity of the knowledge base required increases; and
- competencies may be related to management and specialist functions.

5.4 Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)

The first six levels of competency are now aligned to the new Australian Qualifications Framework for vocational education and training which will be operational from the beginning of 1995. (Levels 7 and 8 of the ASF are higher managerial and professional competencies for which it is more difficult to specify the education requirements).

The Australian Qualifications Framework replaces the names and descriptions of qualifications which were formerly devised by the individual States and Territories. The qualifications framework is intended to:

- provide nationally consistent awards in post-compulsory education;
- clarify the relationships between qualifications;
- encourage individuals to progress through education and training levels;
- allow for flexible pathways between the education and training sectors;
- contribute to the provision of more and higher quality vocational education and training;
- allow for input from industry, the community and professional organisations as well as education and training authorities and providers in determining the requirements for qualifications; and
- promote national and international recognition of Australian qualifications.

The table below shows the relationship of the first six levels of the Australian Standards Framework to the vocational qualifications in the Australian Qualifications Framework.

Australian Standards Framework	Australian Qualifications Framework
ASF level 1	Certificate I
ASF level 2	Certificate II
ASF level 3	Certificate III
ASF level 4	Certificate IV
ASF level 5	Diploma
ASF level 6	Advanced Diploma

5.5 National Framework for Recognition of Training (NFROT)

The National Framework for the Recognition of Training (VEETAC, November 1991) is a policy document setting out the agreement on training recognition between the Commonwealth, State and Territory ministers. This allows the States and Territories to continue to exercise responsibility for training but within a nationally agreed framework of principles.

The National Framework for Recognition of Training (known as 'NFROT') allows for both training curriculum and training providers to be recognised by bodies established at State level, but for national registers of such programs and providers to be maintained which enable full recognition across the country.

The Framework opens up the recognition of training to ensure that competency can be certified however and wherever it has been acquired. It establishes the mechanisms for two major changes to the former system:

- credit towards a qualification can now be obtained for learning outcomes achieved in any setting; and
- any organisation which can meet certain quality criteria may now be approved as a provider of accredited training.

It is no longer essential (as it was in most cases) to attend government-funded training institutions to obtain an accredited vocational qualification.

The Framework sets down principles for five major components of the system:

- accreditation of courses;
- credit transfer between training programs and accredited courses;
- registration of providers;
- recognition of prior learning; and
- assessment.

5.5.1 Accreditation of courses

Most notable among the accreditation principles are:

- the emphasis on the involvement of industry in identifying the competency standards required;
- the emphasis on flexible learning procedures which ensure multiple entry and exit points, recognition of a range of training environments and learning modes, and customisation to meet client needs (while preserving the integrity of the course);
- articulation between course levels and sectors of education; and
- quality assurance measures requiring monitoring and review.

5.5.2 Credit transfer between training programs and accredited courses

The credit transfer principles allow for trainees to gain credit in an accredited course for competence gained from a structured training program which does not itself have accreditation, such as an in-house training program conducted by a company. The principles assure that the credit is only given for genuine parity of training outcomes.

5.5.3 Registration of providers

The principles for registration of providers allow for accredited training to be delivered by bodies outside the public institutional system ie "private providers". The requirements and safeguards to ensure ethical, quality provision are built into these principles.

5.5.4 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The inclusion of Recognition of Prior Learning principles in the framework now ensures the recognition of competence as a result of any form of learning whether by formal or informal means. The principles are couched to promote commitment by training systems to provide access to competency assessment for all who believe they have relevant prior learning.

5.5.5 Assessment

The principles of assessment point to the importance of ensuring that competency standards are the benchmarks by which achievement will be measured. Flexible assessment methods are encouraged allowing for different settings and requirements.

A major component of the NFROT principles is the concept of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). An illustrative example of this process is described below.

Best Practice Example

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

Ford Motor Company of Australia

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a key component of the National Framework for the Recognition of Training. It is the acceptance that an individual may acquire competency from a variety of sources some of which are outside the formal training system. The process of RPL provides an individual with the opportunity to demonstrate this competency, and have it certified.

RPL processes are currently being implemented within educational institutions, other skills recognition bodies and within companies themselves. The advantages for companies in adopting an RPL process are that it provides an incentive for employees to undertake additional training leading to an accredited qualification and genuine career progression. It also provides a clear basis for award classification decisions.

Ford Motor Company of Australia Ltd, in association with Broadmeadows College of TAFE, was one of the first companies to initiate enterprise-based RPL. This stemmed from an approach to the TAFE College in 1988/9 by Ford to seek accreditation for its in-house training programs. A pilot study followed in which a group of Ford employees were assessed to identify the skills and knowledge gained through both formal and informal training within the company, and the relationship of these to existing accredited programs.

Following the development of the Vehicle Industry Certificate, an accredited course designed for the vehicle manufacturing industry, the process was then offered on a large-scale basis to Ford employees during 1991/2. This arrangement was formalised in an Industrial Relations agreement.

Information about RPL was distributed by letter to the 8,500 members of the non-trade workforce at Ford and the Vehicle Industry Certificate was widely promoted, with the result that 2,500 employees had applied for RPL, received appropriate credits and entered further training by the end of 1992. The assessments were carried out by three-person Review Panels of company staff, who had undertaken a two-day training program with the Broadmeadows College of TAFE. To promote fairness in the process, panels were balanced in terms of the interests represented and consisted of the employee's supervisor, a training officer and a union representative. A range of evidence was considered during assessment including detailed statements made on an application form, a candidate's breadth of experience, documentary evidence, interview responses and practical demonstration of skills. Successful applicants were advised of credits and further training opportunities, while unsuccessful applicants had access to an appeals mechanism.

Documentation of the processes used at Ford which has now been supplemented by experiences in a range of other settings and contexts, have provided a body of knowledge on what constitutes best practice in RPL. These are detailed in a range of publications from Broadmeadows College of TAFE and in a national report *Arrangements for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Australia* VEETAC January 1993. The latter document points out the need for supportive, fair and efficient services at each of six stages in the process: the information stage, the initial support and counselling stage, the application stage, the assessment stage, the post-assessment guidance stage and the certification stage.

While there is an obviously significant commitment of resources involved in these processes, the Ford experience shows the expense to be justified by the benefits in terms of increased staff morale, greater commitment to skills upgrade and improved relationships between workers and management.

5.6 Development of training curriculum

The guidelines for the development of accredited training curriculum have been produced by the Australian Committee for Training Curriculum (ACTRAC) Sept 1992 using the principles specified in NFROT.

Achievement of the relevant industry defined competency standards should form the end point of training. However the specification of competency standards is not a curriculum in its own right. The learning outcomes of training curricula must be devised to optimise learning and will frequently specify stages of progression and the linking of knowledge or skill requirements in combinations that differ from those in the standards specification. However there must be continual cross-referencing between training curriculum and the competency statements, identifying the relationships.

Modular curriculum structures are preferred to enable a more flexible organisation of learning to meet the needs of individual learners. A module is a specific learning segment, complete in itself and capable of being separately assessed. The precise duration of a learning module is not stated, although nominal durations may be specified to assist scheduling. It is however understood that rates of progress will differ between learners.

The module descriptors define performance in terms of learning outcomes, assessment criteria, conditions and assessment methods. While each learning outcome must be specified in demonstrable terms, the underpinning knowledge required for successful performance must be identified. Criterion-referenced assessment should be used rather than norm-referenced assessment to ensure that all graduates may achieve the required standard.

Accreditation of training curriculum is now open to private providers of training as well as the public training sector, provided that training programs are designed to lead to the achievement of competency standards.

Best Practice Example

COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND ASSESSMENT

The National Laboratory Science Technician Curriculum Project (SCITECH Project)

The National Laboratory Science Technician Curriculum Project commenced in April 1992. This project, funded by the Australian Committee for Training Curriculum (ACTRAC), ultimately aims to produce a national competency-based curriculum and assessment framework for science technicians, in the fields of animal technology, biological sciences, chemical laboratory technology, food science, geoscience, environmental science and medical laboratory technology, for implementation in 1995.

The project team includes representatives from employer, union and TAFE organisations. The project is managed from the Canberra Institute of Technology, ACT.

The project has three stages, of which Stages 1 and 2 have been completed.

Stage 1. an investigation of the nature of the 'science industry' in Australia and the preparation of an inventory of tasks and skills for technicians working in the industry.

Stage 2. a nationwide skills analysis for this occupational group, the development of a set of competency statements for technicians working in each of the six major specialisations, development of study pathways and curriculum framework for those wishing to undertake science technical training and the development of prototype competency-based curricula.

Stage 3. the development of curriculum modules and assessment materials for use by both public and private providers throughout Australia.

Significance of this project to vocational education and training

The SCITECH project is being proposed as a suitable model for future national vocational education and training projects in Australia because its current success is due to:

- strong and continued support from the funding body (ACTRAC), not only for the concept of a national science technician curriculum, but also by providing realistic funding levels in a time of fiscal restraint ;
- high level project management, consultative, analytical and decision-making skills vested with the project manager and team leaders;
- the development of a comprehensive competency framework for all six science technician specialisations;
- the development of a detailed curriculum framework which facilitates entry directly into the program or 'bridging' alternatives and the capacity to accommodate individual State needs ;
- the incorporation of curriculum frameworks and/or modules from other national mathematics, management and communications skills projects funded by ACTRAC;
- the writing of the curriculum modules to a nationally consistent format, with a strong underpinning problem-based learning focus and an emphasis on developing learner competency in planning, utilising resources efficiently, adaptability, independence, problem-solving, performing tests and/or measurements, analysing and interpreting data, documenting procedures and communicating project outcomes;
- the development of complimentary assessment packages for each module which reinforce the concept of 'holistic and integrated assessment' to assist with the delivery of nationally consistent competency-based assessment;
- a greater emphasis on the use of self-assessment, self-evaluation and learning contracts to encourage learners to design and manage their own learning, in addition to traditional summative assessment techniques used by assessors; and
- the acknowledgment by the project team that more and more of vocational education and training will be delivered at the workplace and that the curriculum framework and associated modules and assessment packages would need to address this trend.

5.7 Flexible delivery of training

One of the aims of the new system is to promote flexible delivery processes. A national Working Party on Flexible Delivery established by VEETAC has defined flexible delivery this way:

> "Flexible delivery is an approach to vocational education and training which allows for the adoption of a range of learning strategies in a variety of learning environments to cater for differences in learning styles, learning interests and needs, and variations in learning opportunities." (Flexible Delivery Working Party, November 1992)

Examples of flexible delivery include:

- the delivery of learning at a variety of locations including the workplace, the community or neighbourhood and the home;
- resource-based learning with tutorial support;
- the application of technology to enhance delivery or improve access opportunities; and
- the extension of educational opportunities through access programs, literacy programs, second and third chance opportunities for obtaining qualifications and bridging courses.

Such methods are designed to increase access to training and increase the responsiveness of the training system to the needs of individuals, industry and the community.

It is acknowledged that flexible delivery methods have been used within the training system in various forms for many years. However to meet the requirements of the National Training Reform Agenda, flexible

delivery is expected to become a central goal of all providers rather than an adjunct to mainstream provision. The framework identifies national goals and targets to enable State and Territory TAFE and training systems develop plans and strategies appropriate for the needs of their clients. The Goals are directed at institutional change focusing on:

- organisational arrangements and processes;
- funding mechanisms and performance indicators;
- cultural and attitudinal change;
- staff development of teaching/training staff;
- flexible course structures and delivery strategies; and
- national collaboration.

Best Practice Example

FLEXIBLE DELIVERY –

Deakin University and associated TAFE Colleges

The aim of flexible delivery, which is promoted as part of every strand of the national training reform agenda, is to meet the needs of individuals, industry and the community as effectively as possible. The technology management programs offered by Deakin University working with several TAFE Colleges as agents, provide an outstanding example of flexible delivery in action. These programs are designed to develop technological knowledge simultaneously with management skills at the level appropriate for workers at various stages in their career. The programs have been developed in close association with industry and allow for customisation for the needs of particular companies.

A structured program is offered which articulates from Certificate level through to Associate Diploma and Bachelor Degree using a competency-based learning approach. At each level students may exit with a nationally registered qualification. Recognition of Prior Learning is also an important feature making it possible for students to enter the program at the most appropriate point.

Access to the programs is possible twenty-four hours per day by the following means:

- self-paced distance education materials in the form of print material, supplemented with video and audio cassettes, are supplied to the student for study at their own convenience;
- students use lap-top computers or personal computer and telephone modem to link from their home or workplace to the main computer on the University campus;
- computer managed learning software is used which delivers assessment tasks for each module to the students and records their progress; and
- the computer communication link enables students to contact their tutor by sending and receiving electronic mail messages. This provides a quick and reliable communication system which also acts as a means of assignment delivery from students to tutors.

A number of large companies use the program as a means of skill and knowledge upgrade for their workforce. Course materials used are modified for the needs of particular industries, to enable the course to relate directly to a student's working environment. Face-to-face contact sessions with tutors are organised on an occasional basis at the relevant industrial site.

Both employers and employees have responded well to the program. The course arrangements allow employees to access educational resources without extended periods of absence from the workplace. Students can balance career, home life and study with maximum convenience. These programs have been seen as a model for the way in which an education provider can develop an approach which best serves its clients, rather than pursuing traditional institutional methods.

5.8 The convergence of general and vocational education

Another vital part of the reform process, concerns the preparation of young people for their future participation in the workforce. *Young People's Participation in Post-Compulsory Education and Training*, (the Finn Report) a major report issued in July 1991, advocated a convergence of general and vocational education and the need for universal achievement of employment-related "Key Competencies" - the broad transferable skills required for successful participation in work and citizenship. These ideas were accepted and the achievement of key competencies is to be incorporated into the curriculum of both the schools and training sectors.

Further development work in this area was undertaken by the Mayer Committee whose 1992 report made these statements regarding the personal qualities required in the workplace :

> "The most obvious change in workplaces is a move away from specialised jobs and separate functions towards more broadly defined work roles and organisational structures that provide for devolved and shared responsibility for planning and decision making. Greater value is being placed on factors such as creativity, initiative, being entrepreneurial and being able to think critically about improved work practices." (Mayer, September 1992)

The key competencies are intended to reflect these observations about the requirements of the workplace . As designated by the Mayer Committee the key competencies are:

- Collecting, Analysing and Organising Information
- Communicating Ideas and Information
- Planning and Organising Activities
- Working with Others and in Teams
- Using Mathematical Ideas and Techniques
- Solving Problems
- Using Technology
- Cultural Understandings

For the purposes of nationally consistent assessment and reporting, three performance levels have been established for each Key Competency. Validation studies, funded by the Federal Government are currently being undertaken to refine the competencies and benchmark the performance levels within selected industries. This work will continue over 1994-95.

5.9 Increasing the involvement of young people in education and training

A comprehensive system of structured entry level training, the Australian Vocational Training System (AVTS), is now being established following the government's acceptance of the recommendations of a report issued by the Employment and Skills Formation Council in 1992. Apprenticeships and traineeships are to be merged into the new system which will have national consistency of outcomes and recognition, and allow for articulated progression through to higher levels of competence including diplomas and degrees.

The AVTS which is currently being piloted, aims to ensure that almost all school leavers obtain structured training and gain qualifications for work. It allows for a range of flexible pathways to achieving vocational certificates equivalent to Levels 1 to 3 of the Australian Standards Framework, and in addition for the achievement of the Key Competencies. The system builds on the structures established to promote competency based training and incorporates the principles on which the national framework is established.

Students may achieve their qualifications by one of four broad options:

- full-time study in school to Year 12 followed by specified periods of on-the-job training and work experience;
- an integrated vocational year delivered by TAFE or Senior Colleges which includes some structured work experience;
- half time work and half time study programs for students who leave school after Year 10 or 11;
- flexible structured work-based training integrated with appropriate certificate level studies at a TAFE or Senior College

Industry will be involved in the development of all pathways and each course will incorporate national core industry standards. Courses will be recognised by industry as leading to, or providing credit towards a national vocational qualification.

The Commonwealth Government is also providing considerable funding to support the establishment of the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation. This will be a national body controlled by industry rather than the government which will support school-industry programs at the local level. Its role will be to foster partnerships between schools and enterprises through local regional training brokers, and to provide programs which:

- form part of upper secondary schooling and are recognised by both school and industry
- combine on-the-job and off-the-job learning
- require learning and assessment in the workplace
- operate within a system of quality control
- have shared education-industry management at the local level

The following targets for participation in the AVTS have been established for the year 2001:

- 90 per cent of 19 year olds should have completed Year 12, an initial post-school qualification or be participating in training;
- 90 per cent of young people by the age of 20 should attain vocational qualifications equivalent to level 2 of the ASF or be progressing to a higher level qualification;
- 60 per cent of young people by the age of 22 should attain a vocational qualification at level 3 or higher level; and
- there should be equality between young men and women in terms of overall rates of participation and attainment.

It should be noted that, although directed at young people, there is no barrier to people of mature age becoming involved in these programs.

There is also provision for improved training allowances to participants in the system and for incentives to employers to provide work experience for trainees.

6. POLICIES TO PROMOTE CLOSER LINKAGES BETWEEN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND INDUSTRIES

An important aspect of the new national training system is the promotion of closer linkages between the institutional providers of vocational education and training and the industry sector. The national goals for vocational education and training stress the need for publicly funded, private and industry providers to work together collaboratively, and for vocational education and training to be responsive to the needs of industry.

Competency-Based Training is intended to operate in a way that integrates the workplace and off-the-job components of training. This approach necessitates close involvement between colleges and industry in a collaborative approach to training delivery. Some programs are college-based but involve periods of work experience in which structured training is provided. Others comprise approximately equal amounts of work-based and college-based learning. Still others are industry-based but some (or all) components of the training are provided in consultation with or directly by college staff at the workplace.

Flexible delivery methods extend the range of ways in which workplace training may be supported by public institutions, incorporating communication technologies, provision of training materials in a range of media, direct tutoring services or the establishment of structures in which support is provided on a regular basis by workplace mentors with occasional visits from college teaching staff.

Assessment in the workplace under workplace conditions is now a requirement of many accredited programs. Again the arrangements vary. However they frequently involve college staff in either conducting the assessment or in providing training for workplace personnel to act as assessors. Records of assessment conducted by workplace personnel may be incorporated as part of the requirements for a credential offered by a college.

Apprenticeships and traineeships have always combined off-the-job learning with workplace experience. The Australian Vocational Training System extends this focus by proposing a range of flexible pathways moving between the workplace and formal education settings. Structured workplace training is a key part of this system.

While many of these collaborative arrangements are fully or partially government funded, increasingly training services are provided to industry on a fee-for-service basis from the colleges. Award restructuring and its training implications have encouraged industry to seek the services of the institutional providers. The Training Guarantee legislation has increased this trend with the requirement for industries to spend 1.5 per cent of the amount paid in staff salaries on training programs.

A best practice example which follows, describes the way in which one company used the services of a number of TAFE colleges in the development of successful training programs.

Best Practice Example

WORK-BASED LEARNING

A Collaborative Project in Work-Based Learning in South Australia between Monroe Auto Equipment Company, Adelaide College of TAFE, Panorama College of TAFE and Regency Park College of TAFE.

Monroe Australia is part of a world-wide organisation which produces shock absorbers and ride control systems. Its products are exported to many parts of the world and through investment and continuous quality improvement has the capacity and technical expertise to continue as a world supplier. Monroe Australia perceives its strengths to be in its team spirit and quality of its people, which is why Monroe is committed to professional development for all its employees.

In 1985 the Monroe plant was operating with a employee group who believed that Total Quality Control (TQC) and Total Quality Management (TQM) processes were not he concern of factory employees. As a consequence industrial lost time was extreme, a 45 percent employee turnover existed and workers compensation rates were $2 million a year.

In an attempt to change the 'work culture' the management implemented a quality assurance program, Automotive Quality Assurance Program (AQAP) with a staff focus and incorporating team problem-solving and quality awareness. In 1989 as a result of award restructuring , the introduction of the Metal Industry Award and an enterprise agreement between all site unions and the company, Monroe was able to eliminate demarcation disputes and offer quality training by implementing a second phase of the AQAP program. However, employers who had undertaken the training felt the program was not adequate and a new training program was developed by Adelaide College of TAFE, known as the Support Training program which was devised to:

- promote the personal development of individual employees;
- prepare employees fro future training opportunities;
- ensure good communication processes;
- ensure safety information was understood; and
- ensure language skills would not be a barrier to full participation in training and development programs.

In the same year, Regency Park College of TAFE was engaged to develop a further program that would:

- introduce employees to the need for change and how to manage and participate in the change process;
- give all employees better communication skills;
- introduce the concept of continuous quality improvement; and
- train employees in Methods Theory and Problem Solving Process.

Phase 1 of this training program was designed to:

- encourage team building by including participants from all departments and levels within the company;
- bring about cultural changes; and
- demonstrate a full commitment to the ongoing development of employees and the company.

Phase 2 of the program consisted of modules that were company credentialled and also allowed for credit transfer with selected TAFE programs. The modules were:

- Monroe Management Certificate
- Monroe Manufacturing Certificate
- Monroe Australia Problem Solving Program (MAPS)

The Work-based Learning Process

To meet company requirements the training programs needed to be delivered at the workplace and offered during work hours. Panorama College of TAFE was employed to deliver the Support Training and Regency Park College of TAFE to deliver Phase 1 and 2.

The method of delivery by staff of these colleges required re-thinking because of the various levels within the training group - from professional through to factory floor - and all members of the groups were to do the same program. Each group consisted of approximately 16 members who were expected to help others and to use team skills within the working group and sub-groups.

Monroe operates three shifts per day and it was a requirement that TAFE staff be prepared to deliver the programs at hours outside of 9am-5pm. Another expectation was that for every hour spent delivering training, TAFE staff should spend an additional half an hour on-site to allow employees to have one-on-one consultations with the teachers and also for TAFE staff to familiarise themselves with the environment and the organisation. Another requirement involved continuity of TAFE staff and this meant that teachers had to develop skills outside their specialty areas.

Competency-based assessment is an option during Phase 2 for those employees who wish to have their learning formally recognised for credit towards a TAFE accredited program. Phase 1 is not competency assessed and now forms part of a company Induction Program.

As a result of this collaborative work-based learning program:

- absenteeism has fallen from 7.8 per cent in 1989 to 5.8 per cent in 1992 with a prediction of reaching 3 per cent;
- employee turnover has declined from 45 per cent in 1985 to 10 per cent and declining annually;
- time lost to injuries (average per month) has decreased from 17 days/month in 1988 to 7 in 1991 and predicted to reach 6 in 1992;
- workers compensation payouts (percent of payroll) has fallen from 6.6 per cent in 1988 to 3.5 per cent in 1991, representing a drop in dollar terms from $2 million (1985) to $200,000 (1991); and
- training hours have risen from 16,000 (1990) to 26, 260 (1992).

Monroe Australia can be justifiably proud of its achievements. The recognition of achievement through in-house 'certificates' appears to be an incentive to employee responsiveness and participation.

7. POLICIES TO IMPROVE THE PARTICIPATION OF SPECIAL SOCIAL GROUPS

Improving the participation of disadvantaged groups is one of the identified national goals for vocational education and training in Australia and an important emphasis in the reform process.

National strategies are either in existence or in development for each of the following categories of people who are often at a disadvantage in accessing both training and employment:

- women;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- people with disabilities;
- people of non-English speaking background; and
- unemployed people.

7.1 Women

Women represent 42 per cent of the Australian workforce ('Women in Entry Level Training' in *Women and Work* July 1993), however 80 per cent work in only four industries:

- wholesale and retail trade;
- finance, property and business services;
- community services, and
- recreation and personal services.

Their employment tends to be at the lower end of the employment hierarchy in clerical, sales and personal service positions with average weekly earnings at 66 per cent of those of men. This disparity is seen to relate to the fact that women are normally found in jobs where little training is provided. The traditional apprenticeship system which provided training and employment in the trades has been heavily dominated by males.

Over the last decade, government policies have promoted increased employment opportunities of women. The Sex Discrimination Act 1984, for example, banned discrimination against women in appointments to positions in the workforce . This has been followed by a range of measures designed to improve women's access to training and recognition of their existing skills.

The National Training Board has, since its beginnings, pursued a policy that competency standards must not limit access to employment or training on the grounds of gender. To support this policy a Technical Guidance document entitled *Eliminating Gender Bias in the Development of National Competency Standards* (NTB 1991) was issued widely.

Competency standards are now being developed in all of the industries traditionally regarded as "female". In many cases this will be the first time an attempt has been made to establish objectively the knowledge and skills required to perform these roles. This enables structured training and recognition of prior learning to be provided in these areas. Already there is evidence of more women being promoted as a result of such training. ("Australian Taxation Office Shows the Way in Competency Based Training" in *NTB Network*, December, 1993)

In 1991 a national plan for the improvement of women's participation in the technical and further education system was accepted by the Commonwealth and State ministers. The plan stated that:

> "Equal treatment of women by TAFE is not only a social justice goal. It will result in more efficient use of national human resources and an improved TAFE system." (*Women and TAFE - A National Plan of Action* , Department of Employment, Education and Training , Canberra 1991)

The Plan put forward a range of strategies to improve women's involvement in and access to employment-related training.

Among the provisions of the plan are "gender inclusion" which states that:

> "All curriculum, teaching methodologies, delivery modes and materials must be inclusive of the way women learn. Course counselling must be free of gender-based assumptions. Study opportunities and flexible timetables which cater for women's learning and lifestyles must be provided." (p.21)

The Plan sets targets for improving the range of courses, and their official accredited status in women's traditional employment areas and for encouraging women to enter non-traditional areas such as engineering, building, and rural and horticulture.

The report, *Women in Entry-Level Training* (November 1991) outlined a range of strategies to improve women's participation recommending that governments directly approach industry and union bodies to train more female entry-level trainees. One such strategy currently being implemented is the Additional Female Apprentice Incentive which allows employers to claim a subsidy for taking on a second or subsequent female apprentice.

The new Australian Vocational Training System, which will effectively replace the apprenticeship and traineeship systems, has a stated objective of equality between young women and men in rates and levels of overall participation by the year 2001.

Recognition of Prior Learning is being seen as a major breakthrough for women, who may lack formal training but often have skills and knowledge developed from work and life experience. Under RPL provisions women can be given credit for these competencies and encouraged to enter further education leading to an accredited award.

Girls and women have over a number of years been encouraged to seek non-traditional careers by programs such as:

- *Tradeswomen on the Move* in which females working in the trades visited schools to talk about their jobs; and
- Preparatory courses for women in TAFE colleges which offer an introduction to a variety of trades.

The following best practice example illustrates an example of women training in non-traditional areas, in this instance, the building and construction industry.

Best Practice Example

WOMEN IN NON-TRADITIONAL TRADE TRAINING

The Building Industry Group Training Scheme (BIGS)

Group Training Schemes act as training companies, which recruit apprentices, provide their initial training and then hire them out to employers for a specified period. Via this means apprentices are enabled to have varied on-the-job training experiences in the industry.

The Building Industry Group Training Scheme (BIGS) has since 1987 made considerable effort to recruit and support women in the building trades. Some employers have resisted this move but the barriers are slowly breaking down as women show their ability to work successfully in the industry.

The Scheme worked with a TAFE College, the Building Workers Industrial Union, and Affirmative Action in Training (a government-funded unit established to support women's access to training) to trial a number of ways of involving women in training for the industry. An equal employment opportunity officer supports the program and works closely with the *Tradeswomen on the Move* project recruiting women into the Scheme.

The Scheme's experience has highlighted the importance of creating the right training conditions to encourage women to remain in the trade. It was found to be important to have equal numbers of males and females in a training group.

Women felt isolated if only one or two of them were placed in a largely male group. When placed in all female groups, the girls seemed to flourish during the off-the-job training, giving each other a great deal of support. However they were left inadequately prepared for working with men on the building site and often left the industry at a later stage.

The mixed groups were encouraged to work together in teams to develop a natural acceptance of each other. The greater maturity of many of the women in the scheme was seen as a useful influence on the men who were often younger and less committed.

The project demonstrates that women are interested in applying for the trades and can be as successful as the men.

(Adapted from "Better Access, Greater Equity" in *Women and Work*, October 1993)

7.2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (DEET, 1989) states that :

> "Australians generally expect that policies and programs will be developed by the governments of the Commonwealth and the States and Territories, to overcome the economic and social disadvantages of Aboriginal Australians, help them maintain their distinctive cultures, and enable them to achieve recognition and status within the nation."

This Policy had been preceded by a number of enquiries including the 1985 Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs which recommended the linking of Aboriginal employment and economic development with a concerted effort in Aboriginal education and training policies.

The Education Policy was developed and endorsed by the Commonwealth and all State and Territory Governments to improve the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at all levels from pre-school through to tertiary education. Figures quoted in the Education Policy identified considerably lower participation rates than the national average at every level of education. Only 85 per cent of children of compulsory school age were attending school as compared to almost 100 per cent of the rest of the population. Only 10 per cent of the Aboriginal population aged over 15 years old had post-school educational qualifications as compared with a national equivalent of 31 per cent.

Lack of participation was seen to be related to two main problems:

- many Aboriginal people live in remote areas where adequate educational services have not been established; and
- existing educational opportunities were often characterised by a lack of sensitivity to the culture of Aboriginal people.

The policy identified four key areas to be addressed:

1. The increased involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in decisions about their own education, and in the actual delivery of education.
2. Access to education on equal terms with the rest of the population.
3. Participation in all levels of education, in a way that is relevant, enjoyable and useful to the same extent as the rest of the population.
4. Fair educational results in terms of their own performance and the appreciation by all Australians of their history and culture.

Since the development of the Educational Policy, the Commonwealth Government has provided substantial funding via the Aboriginal Education Strategic Initiatives Program (AESIP) to support participation initiatives, supplementing programs already funded by State Governments.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are encouraged to participate and remain in education and training by such government funded measures as:

- *ABSTUDY* which provides financial assistance to individual students in secondary education, TAFE and higher education;
- the *Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme* which enables students to receive individual assistance as part of a formal education or training program; and
- *Vocational and Educational Guidance for Aboriginals* providing information on career and educational options. Projects funded under this scheme can include work experience programs and contact with other Aboriginal people already in education or training.

The 1992 report on the implementation of AESIP in 1990-1991 indicated widespread development of educational advisory committees of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and an encouraging increase in Aboriginal student numbers.

State governments around the country have also provided extensive support for programs to increase Aboriginal participation. In the TAFE system increasingly courses targeted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are being developed which are accredited and vocationally specific. These include course areas such as child care, hospitality, business, agriculture and horticulture, art and tourism.

Initiatives include the Remote Area Teacher Education Program conducted by Cairns TAFE College in Queensland which provides the opportunity for people from remote Aboriginal communities to undertake teacher training without having to leave their communities. The introduction of computer-assisted learning into this program has dramatically increased retention rates from 10 per cent to 90 per cent.

In Victoria, the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) operates as an Industry Training Board and develops comprehensive training plans for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

As part of its Equity strategy the Australian Vocational Training System is looking to a target of equal participation rates with the remainder of the population in vocational certificate level training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by the year 2001. In keeping with the policy commitment to involve Aboriginal people in all educational planning, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, a national body of elected representatives from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, was asked to recommend the nature, timing and measurement of a staged program to achieve this target.

7.3. People with disabilities

During the 1980s most State governments enacted legislation preventing discrimination against people with disabilities, and at the national level the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 provided uniform protection across the country for this group.

Within the anti-discrimination legislation it is assumed that different treatment for people with disabilities is appropriate where it is intended to ensure that they have equal opportunities or meet their special needs.

The 1993 Australian Bureau of Statistics figures indicate that the disabled are twice as likely to leave school before the completion of Year 12 and that they are significantly under-represented in the TAFE system and in the workforce.

"Flex*Ability*: - A Strategic Framework for People with Disability in TAFE 1994 - 1996", commissioned by the National TAFE Chief Executives Committee has recently been published. The Framework makes the following key statement:

> "Investment in training for people with disabilities has the same value as for the broader community. Providing vocational education and training to people with disabilities increases their likelihood of employment, resulting in greater social and financial independence in the community." (p.39)

A range of measures are set out in the Framework to promote support for people with disabilities in the TAFE system including :

- elimination of bias;
- increased use of statistics to show progress towards participation targets;
- higher levels of awareness and skill among vocational education staff in adapting teaching strategies;
- increased flexible delivery and the use of appropriate technologies;
- improved career guidance and employment services;
- links with employers in providing on-the-job training; and
- increased involvement of people with disabilities in the planning and delivery of training.

The Strategy advocates strongly the concept of "reasonable adjustment" (derived from the anti-discrimination legislation) to promote appropriate adjustments to organisational and physical environments and learning conditions to lessen the impact of the disability.

This is seen to affect:

- information;
- college design;
- learning resources including adaptive aids and technology;
- curriculum design including alternative performance strategies;
- organisational and policy arrangements;
- staffing; and
- the climate of acceptance.

A number of State governments have already instituted special funding measures to provide for special learning services and building modifications for disabled students in TAFE colleges.

The National Training Board recognises the need to adapt competency-based training processes to promote inclusion for disabled people . Their current project *Elimination of Bias in National Competency Standards* is intended to extend the original work in *Eliminating Gender Bias* , 1991 to other disadvantaged groups.

Another project, Competency Assessment Mechanisms and Reasonable Adjustment (CAMRA) is investigating competency assessment processes to identify appropriate adjustment strategies for disabled people. Competencies in the areas of horticulture and hospitality are being examined with the aim of developing practical assessment guidelines and principles to remove inherent bias against disabled people.

Measures to encourage employers to recruit and support the training of disabled workers include:

- a Disabled Apprentice Wage Subsidy; and
- financial assistance for workplace modifications and tutorial assistance.

The Commonwealth Government has recently announced a new initiative - the Supported Wages System - to provide incentives to employers to take on disabled people who are unlikely to obtain jobs normally because of the effect of their disability. The wage would be determined as a percentage of able-bodied productivity. It is anticipated that training would form part of this process.

Disabled people are also recognised as a group for special attention by the Australian Vocational Training System. Publicly funded providers of training are expected to achieve reasonable targets for their participation. A number of AVTS pilot programs are currently investigating and trialing special programs for students with disabilities.

7.4 People of non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB)

The *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* (Office of Multicultural Affairs 1989) sets out the Australian Government's multicultural policy in which commitment is made to:

> "Social Justice: the right of all Australians to equality of treatment and opportunity, and the removal of barriers of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender or place of birth; and
>
> Economic efficiency: the need to maintain, develop and utilise effectively the skills and talents of all Australians, regardless of background."

Immigration has made an important contribution to Australia's economic development particularly since the Second World War. Many migrants have been successful in business and public life.

The most significant single issue affecting the opportunities for migrants in employment and training is their ability to understand and use the English language.

The English language programs of the Adult Migrant Education Program have been available for newly arrived migrants over many years. Not all participate however or remain in these programs long enough to become proficient in the use of English.

Recent policies have recognised that large sections of the unskilled workforce have significant language difficulties, which contribute to workplace inefficiencies and prevent the workers concerned from moving into higher paid employment. It is also recognised that workers with low levels of English language and literacy are severely disadvantaged in the process of industry restructuring. Language difficulties cause training problems and make these people vulnerable to unemployment.

The following recent initiatives are aimed at improving language skills.

1. In 1991 *Australia's Language - the Australian Language and Literacy Policy* was issued by the Commonwealth Government to provide a national commitment to improved language skills. A key goal of the policy is:

   "All Australian residents should develop and maintain a level of spoken and writter. English which is appropriate for a range of contexts, with the support of education and training programs addressing their diverse learning needs."

   The policy addressed a range of issues (which included the literacy problems of English-speaking Australians) and committed the government to significantly increased funding for adult language and literacy education - to be provided in TAFE colleges, community settings, and the workplace.

2. Workplace language and literacy programs have been growing in importance, particularly as a result of the award restructuring and competency development process. Because of the increased training demands, the need for appropriate language skills has become highly apparent. The Union movement has often led this process by insisting that occupational training be accompanied by language teaching. Workplace literacy programs are normally designed to use vocabulary and situations relevant to the employment context.

3. Considerable funding has also been allocated to language and literacy programs for the unemployed. Unemployed workers with language problems are identified by the Commonwealth Employment Service and placed in programs in TAFE colleges or community agencies.

4. A 1991 report *Education and Training Needs of Women from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds* (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1991) has drawn attention to the special needs of female migrants. Flexible programs for teaching English were advocated.

5. The Australian Vocational Training System (Carmichael 1992) supports additional measures to improve English language skills including the development of a national core curriculum in English as a Second Language and an emphasis on educational programs conducted in the workplace, linked to the workplace context.

Initiatives outside the language development area have also taken place to support people of Non-English Speaking Background:

- for skilled migrants, the issue of Recognition of Prior Learning has special significance. As part of the Multicultural Agenda, the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR) was established to provide a nationally co-ordinated approach to recognising professional skills and qualifications gained overseas; and

- as with other groups seen to be vulnerable in employment and training, the government has set up consultative processes to ensure their input to policy and program development. A Non-English Speaking Background Consultative Group on Vocational Education and Training has been established.

A best practice example of a literacy program for non-English speaking persons is presented on the following page.

Best Practice Example

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING FOR WORKERS FROM NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING BACKGROUNDS

Building Workers Industrial Union and TAFE New South Wales Multicultural Education Unit

The Building Workers Industrial Union (BWIU) recognised that poor English language skills were a barrier to the smooth implementation of award restructuring in the building industry. 40 per cent of the workforce in that industry come from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds.

The Migrant Services Officer of that union approached the Multicultural Education Unit of New South Wales TAFE Department in 1989 to develop an English language and literacy program for the industry.

The program was prepared with the aim of teaching language through content which was specific to the building industry. As far as possible authentic building industry documents provided the bases for the materials used and every effort was made to ensure that language tasks were relevant to the learners' working lives.
The materials were arranged in two modules:

1. Communicating at Work
2. Health and Safety at Work

The course materials were designed to be an adaptive package consisting of a language task bank. In each unit there are tasks aimed at developing speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. The tasks vary in difficulty and type. There is a strong emphasis on learners working together, doing hands-on activities and exchanging information around the class.

It was envisaged that the course could be delivered for groups of differing English language ability; some requiring development of their speaking and listening ability, while others with more advanced oral skills would concentrate on the reading and writing aspects. Teachers of the program were encouraged to adapt the program to the needs of their particular group of learners.

The program was conducted by English language teachers. However teachers of building also attended some of the classes to ensure that building content was accurate and up-to-date and to answer unpredicted technical questions.

The financing of the course was a collaboration with contributions from the NSW TAFE system, the State government's Education Foundation, the union and the employers. The course was conducted during working hours, with the employers contributing the cost of half of the workers' time.

(Adapted from Nowicki, Ursula *Report for the NBCITC on Language and Literacy Provision for the Building Industry*, March, 1992.)

7.5. Unemployed people

Labour market programs have a critical role to play in addressing the issues of the long-term unemployed and high unemployment regions.

The Career Start Traineeships (a subsidised scheme for employers that provides the trainees with integrated on-the-job and off-the-job training) for unemployed people between the ages of 16-64 has been introduced by the Federal Government. During 1992/93 traineeship commencements were 16, 697, with more than 85 per cent of the trainees being in unsubsidised employment or training three months after the completion of the traineeship placement.

In response to Australia's unemployment situation, the Prime Minister, in May 1993 commissioned a discussion paper on employment issues. The report, 'Restoring Full Employment' specified two complementary and reinforcing steps required to reach the goal of full employment, namely to:

- maximise sustainable economic growth; and
- take specific government action to reduce the numbers of long-term unemployed.

In May 1994 the Federal Government released its White Paper on employment, "Working Nation" with the aim to provide a comprehensive approach to generate jobs growth, contribute to economic efficiency and allow all Australians an opportunity to participate in economic recovery. The paper is based on the following themes:

- sustainable and high rates of economic growth leading to the creation of more than one million new jobs at the end of the decade;
- skilling of the workforce through a commitment to national training reform;
- reform of labour market assistance ensuring the long term unemployed are not left behind during the current economic recovery;
- industry development policies;
- regional development strategy; and
- income support initiatives.

The major initiatives are:

- **A Job Compact** - which provides individual case management and access to a range of labour market programs leading to a firm offer of job placement for those unemployed for more than 18 months. It will include a training wage which combines employment with recognised and transferable skills. Over four years 560,000 places will be provided.

- **The National Training Wage** - existing traineeship rates will be simplified and extended and an adult rate will be introduced set at 80 per cent of a set of key award based rates. Wage rates to be training and experience based , not age based.

- **Establishment of a National Employment and Training TaskForce** (NETTFORCE) - to build business and industry commitment to additional entry-level training places and Job Compact places and to give interim authorisation for training packages, where there are delays or impediments to enable employers to meet the requirements under the training wage arrangements.

- **Training Reform** - support for active industry involvement, variety of pathways to training, opportunities for the disadvantaged and a focus on what individuals can do, rather than how long they have spent training.

- **A Youth Training Initiative (YTI)** - young unemployed people under 18 will be provided with case management assistance to find a suitable work, training or education placement. People participating in YTI will be paid a Youth Training Allowance. In four years 90,000 places will be provided.

- **Expansion of Entry Level Training Places** - 50,000 additional entry level places are to be provided by 1995-96. Much of this will be in formal training for apprentices and trainees.

- **Establishment of the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation** - to forge closer links between industry and schools by developing and supporting national upper secondary schools-industry vocational training programs.

CONCLUSION

Much has been achieved in the five years since the national system of vocational education and training was initiated. The highly consultative nature of the reform process has enabled the changes to proceed with the broad agreement of employer bodies and union leaders. A series of representative working parties has established the principles on which the reforms are based. The most notable achievements are as follows:

- a national infrastructure has been established to co-ordinate competency development, curriculum development, funding and priority setting;
- a nationally agreed framework is in place establishing the principles for recognition of training;
- competency standards have been developed for industries employing 2,000,000 people (about one third of the Australian workforce) and Competency Standards Bodies now exist representing industries covering 80 per cent of workers;
- new training curricula are being devised which are more closely linked to performance in the workplace;
- a new national qualifications framework is about to be implemented;
- a significant number of new providers of recognised training have entered the system;
- a range of innovative methods of delivery of training are being put into practice;
- industry and institutional providers are progressively recognising the benefits of working collaboratively;
- general education is being linked to vocational education with the focus on work-related key competencies;
- entry-level training is being completely re-vamped under the Australian Vocational Training System (AVTS) and providing for a highly flexible system of arrangements with strong workplace linkages; and
- policies to improve the participation of disadvantaged groups in vocational education and training have been implemented.

The process of reform is a long-term development, which will take several years to stabilise. While many of the features of the system are still being refined, these significant achievements have laid the groundwork for a national system of vocational education and training designed to fulfil the needs of industry and individuals.

APPENDIX I

GLOSSARY

ACTRAC Australian Committee for Training Curriculum

Established in 1991 to provide a vehicle for collaboration in the development of national competency-based training curricula and related teaching/learning materials. ACTRAC's primary objectives are to:

- initiate and facilitate the development of national competency-based curricula and related networks for both on-the-job and off-the-job training;
- link government and non-government training efforts in the development of curriculum; and
- produce and market high quality competency-based curriculum and associated teaching/learning materials.

ACVETS Australian Committee on Vocational Education and Training Statistics

A national agency responsible for collecting and analysing vocational education and training information throughout Australia and providing statistical information to state and national education and training authorities and agencies. ACVETS has developed the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS). AVETMISS offers a nationally consistent standard for the collection and analysis of vocational and training information.

ANTA The Australian National Training Authority

The Australian National Training Authority was established to begin operation on 1 January 1994. ANTA is responsible to, and provides advice to, a Ministerial Council comprised of the State/Territory and Commonwealth Ministers responsible for vocational education and training. ANTA is to achieve national consistency in the delivery of vocational education through the development of agreed 'national, goals, objectives and priorities', 'national strategic plans' 'firm targets and priorities', co-ordinated funding arrangements, and 'profiles' for vocational education and training at national level. State and Territory authorities will advise ANTA on State and Territory 'profiles'.

ANTA's key functions include:

- formulation of a national strategic plan;
- provision of advice to the Ministerial Council on funding levels and distribution; and
- direct planning involvement with state agencies to ensure efficient and high quality service.

ANTA's four main priorities for 1994-96 are:

1. To build a client-focused culture in the vocational education and training system.
2. To create and promote opportunities for life-long learning.
3. To advance a national identity for the vocational education and training system consistent with the national training reform agenda and through encouragement of national co-operative activities.
4. To reward innovation and best practice in such areas as planning, links with industry and resource utilisation.

ANTA will also set the priorities, and provide some funding, for vocational education and training research.

CSBs **Competency Standards Bodies**

A Competency Standards Body is an organisation which has been formally accepted by the National Training Board to develop competency standards for a section of industry. It presents these standards to the National Training Board for endorsement and is responsible for reviewing them.

DEET **The Commonwealth Department of Employment Education and Training**

DEET was formed in 1987, linking employment, education and training policies to achieve national economic and social goals. DEET accordingly advises on, and gives effect to, government policies for increasing employment opportunities, reducing unemployment, improving the skills base and promoting equity in the labour market.

DEET has responsibility for:

- providing policy advice to promote a national vocational education and training system which is efficient, nationally consistent, equitable and relevant to the economic needs of the nation in order to improve the productivity and skills of the workforce. This includes expanding entry-level training opportunities and the further development and implementation of the Australian Vocational Certificate Training System (AVCTs);
- developing and implementing the Commonwealth's policies for schools and administers programs of financial assistance;
- funds the development and maintenance of a strong and diverse higher education system including the research activities, and advises on and implements the Government's policies for higher education and research;
- funds and administers Australia's labour market programs focussing on the most disadvantaged in the labour market, including the long-term unemployed, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- assistance to job seekers through the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES);
- provision of programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- provision of student income support programs; and
- facilitating and increasing Australia's international orientation and participation in education and training.

DEET is one of the largest Federal Government departments with a budget over $AUS12 billion and more than 15,000 staff.

ITABs **Industry Training Advisory Bodies**

ITAB is a generic term which covers Industry Training Committees and Industry Training Advisory Committees. They are tripartite, autonomous, industry-based incorporated bodies which operate at both national as well as State and Territory levels. ITABs are industries' peak body in education and training. They act as an important conduit for industry's views on training to be put across to governments and training institutions. ITABs develop national competency standards; in some cases provide industry accreditation of education and training programs; and market the importance of training.

MCEETYA **Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs.**

MCEETYA is a new federal body with responsibility for a wide range of issues relating to employment, education, training and youth affairs.

NBEET National Board of Employment, Education and Training

NBEET is a statutory body established to advise the Commonwealth Government on a wide range of education and training issues. The Board is the peak body for four constituent councils: the Australian Education Research Council, the Employment and Skills Formation Council (ESFC), the Higher Education Council and the Schools Council. A key task for the Board is to integrate the advice from these councils whose diverse interests range across employment, education, training and research.

NCVER National Centre for Vocational Education Research

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research Ltd (formerly the TAFE National Centre for Research and Development) is a company jointly owned by the Commonwealth, States and Territories to undertake research into vocational education and training. The Centre undertakes and funds research on vocational education, provides a clearing-house service on vocational education research throughout the Asia-Pacific area, and analyses vocational education statistics for the Commonwealth, States and Territories.

NTB National Training Board

The National Training Board is a public company, whose owner members are the Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers responsible for vocational education and training.

The Board's role is to assist industry to develop national competency standards for occupations and classifications in industry, or enterprise awards or agreements, and then endorse them. The NTB maintains a register of all competency standards developed by CSBs and liaises with appropriate Federal and State bodies to ensure consistency in the implementation of national competency standards. It also maintains a national register of VET courses accredited by State and Territory accreditation bodies.

NTCC National TAFE Chief Executives Committee

The National TAFE Chief Executives Committee is comprised of State/Territory TAFE Directors [formerly the Australian Conference of TAFE Directors (ACTD)] which is a forum to allow the chief executives of TAFE to meet as a group to discuss operational issues.

NOOSR National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition

NOOSR was created in 1989 to co-ordinate the Migrant Skills Reform Strategy as part of the Commonwealth Government's training reform and multicultural agendas. NOOSR is a branch of the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training and deals with the recognition of overseas qualifications within Australia. The development of national competency standards for the professions has become pivotal to NOOSR's initiatives to reform current practice in overseas skills recognition and in professional training.

State and Territory Accreditation Bodies

State and Territory vocational education and training authorities provide official recognition of training providers and accreditation of VET courses. Courses must be competency-based and identify outcomes in terms of competencies endorsed by the National Training Board, or industry or enterprise bodies, and meet the nationally-endorsed principles of accreditation.

APPENDIX II

TAFE 1992 - AUSTRALIA IN SUMMARY

(Source : National Centre for Vocational Education Research, *Selected TAFE Statistics*, p25, 1992.)

	1992	1991	1990
Number of Institutions	704	884	835
Number of Course Enrolments	1,935,780	1,824,536	1,752,021
Number of Annual Student Contact Hours	259,286,000	235,811,030	212,730,000
Estimated Number of Students	1,743,943	1,554,098	1,489,326
Estimated Number of Female Students	987,450	694,922	655,856
Estimated Number of Male Students	742,973	631,874	618,529
Estimated Number of Full-time Students	126,398	99,387	83,911
Estimated Number of Part-time Students	1,617,545	1,454,711	1,405,415
Estimated Number of Commencing Students	1,476,750	1,345,137	1,230,030
Estimated Number of Students in each Stream			
1000 Recreation, Leisure, and Personal Enrichment	701,396	585,274	538,901
Entry to Employment or Further Education			
2100 Basic Education and Basic Employment Skills	182,074	151,135	124,441
2200 Educational Preparation	91,058	93,654	81,587
Initial Vocational Courses			
3100 Operatives	230,828	220,637	213,968
3211 Courses for Recognised Trades Partial Exemption	13,617	9,448	9,677
3212 Courses for Recognised Trades Complete Courses	111,597	125,329	136,844
3221 Other Skills Courses Partial Exemption	59,582	51,475	33,431
3222 Other Skills Courses Complete Courses	93,656	88,446	91,123
3300 Trade Technician/Trade Supervisory	115,725	107,950	105,484
3400 Paraprofessional - Technician	22,211	24,805	26,542
3500 Paraprofessional - Higher Technician	115,902	100,614	95,567
3600 Professional	5,131	4,714	4,987
Courses Subsequent to Initial Vocational Courses			
4100 Operative level	25,647	23,654	27,720
4200 Skilled level	89,481	84,658	75,063
4300 Trade Technician/Trade Supervisory	10,102	7,284	6,847
4400 Paraprofessional - Technician	654	578	659
4500 Paraprofessional - Higher Technician	3,990	4,048	3,305
Estimated Number of Students in each Field of Study			
1 Land and Marine Resources, Animal Husbandry	76,753	56,194	50,095
2 Architecture, Building	86,460	85,699	83,704
3 Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences	244,515	236,831	163,089
4 Business, Administration, Economics	308,912	285,628	250,982
5 Education	15,165	14,372	9,702
6 Engineering, Surveying	188,148	192,851	184,925
7 Health, Community Services	155,496	120,894	63,726
8 Law, Legal Studies	7,689	5,333	3,681
9 Science	68,672	66,928	134,629
10 Veterinary Science, Animal Care	1,914	1,486	1,373
11 Services, Hospitality, Transportation	137,368	136,190	118,323
12 TAFE Multi-Field Education	537,980	228,154	285,037
STAFF			
Number of Full-time Teaching Staff	18,302	17,727	17,890
Total Teaching Hours of all Staff	16,976,645	15,788,298	15,158,782
Total Duty Hours of all Staff	29,991,567	29,360,899	28,948,661
Full-time Equivalent Non-teaching Staff	15,433.98	15,322.42	14,042.41
EXPENDITURE			
Estimated Recurrent Expenditure	$2,185,083,900	$1,567,917,000	$1,405,468,000
Capital Expenditure	$343,626,000	$285,352,000	$264,151,000

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